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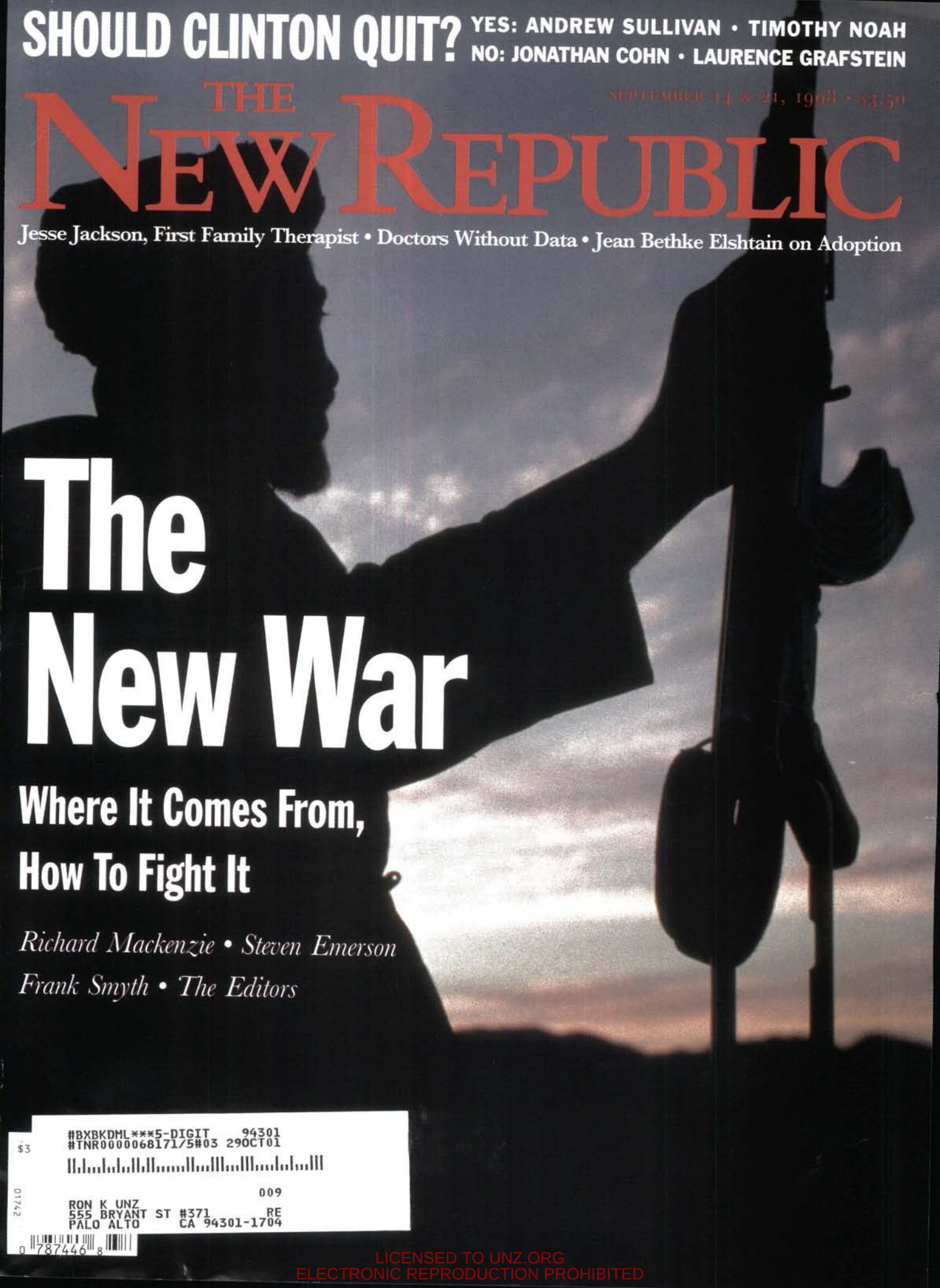

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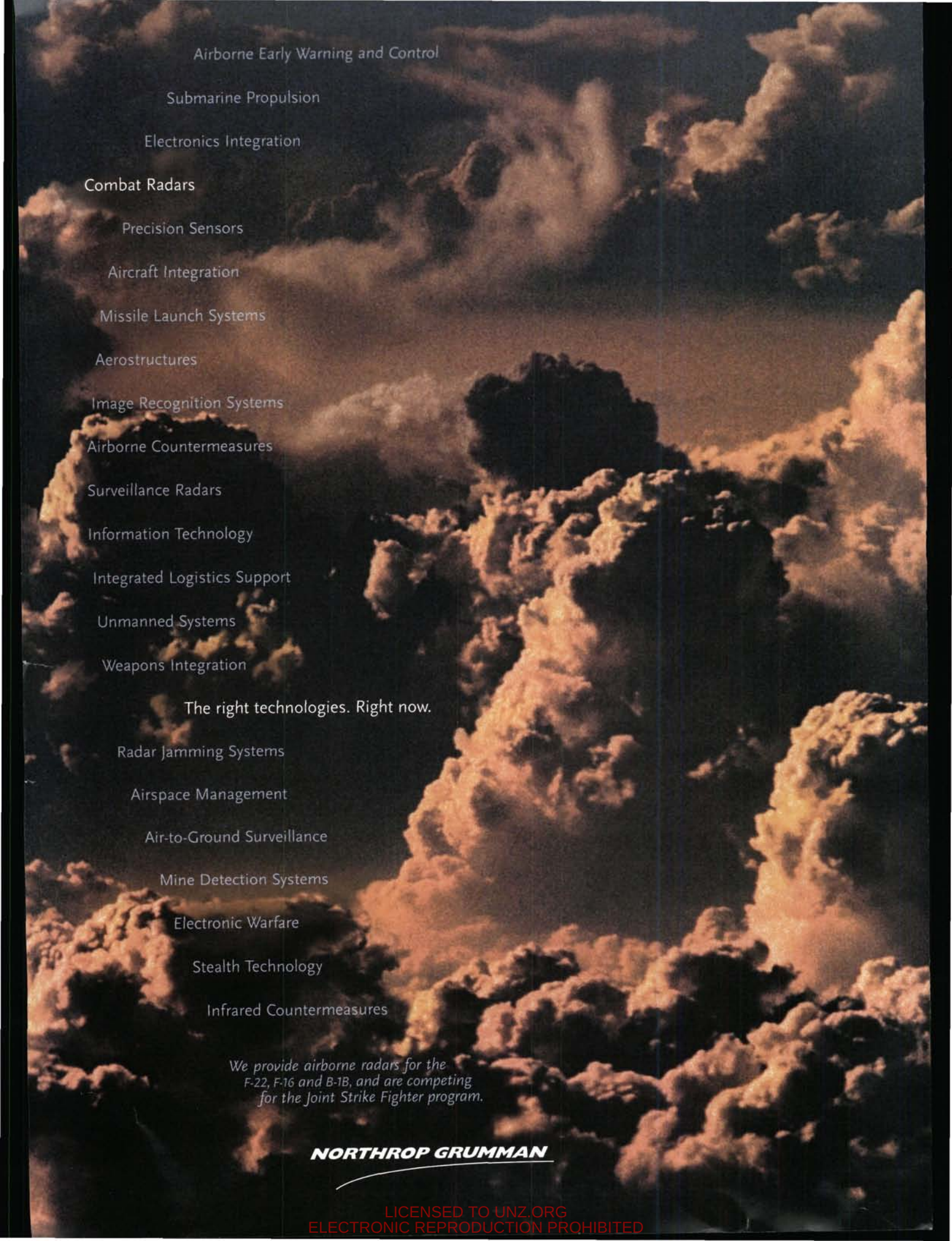


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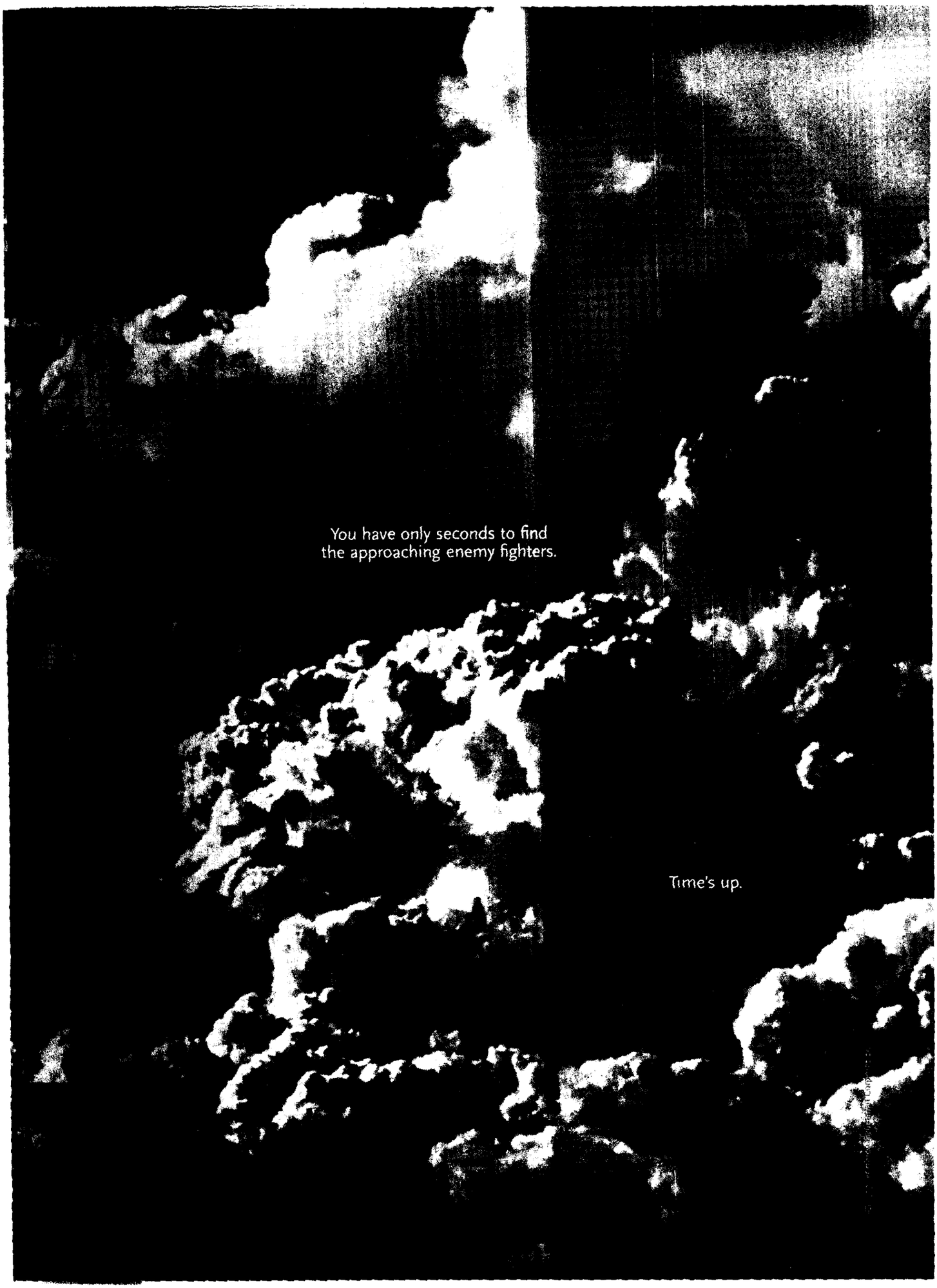


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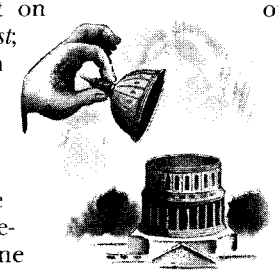
## FROM WASHINGTON

# Unresigned

News from another planet arrived via fax last week, in the form of a press release proclaiming "PRO-CLINTON MEDIA CONTINUEING (*sic*) TO SPIN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE." It seems that, somewhere out in the stars, the press is on a "misinformation campaign" to excuse President Clinton's lies about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Back on Earth, of course, the story is a little different. Lars-Erik Nelson of the New York *Daily News* now calls Clinton a "moral pygmy"; Bob Herbert of *The New York Times* basically agrees. In Thursday's *Washington Post*, all five op-eds were anti-Clinton; not even ideological soulmate E.J. Dionne Jr. could find much nice to say about the philanderer-in-chief.

This response is neither surprising nor particularly unjust. (Like everybody else, I find Clinton's behavior disgusting.) But that doesn't explain another new development: calls for the president to resign, emanating from some of the most respected voices in politics. Within the past week, *Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Clarence Page, former Senator Sam Nunn, and historian Garry Wills have all put the "r" word in play. (Nunn made his pronouncement on the opinion page of the *Post*; Wills used his column in *Time* magazine.) It's only a matter of time before other sober minds follow suit—a prediction I make with some confidence since two such articles appear elsewhere in the very magazine you now hold in your hands.



Calls for resignation are not entirely novel, of course. For weeks now, a small core of Clinton critics has called on him to step down because it believes his actions have so besmirched the office that he's no longer fit to serve. I don't happen to agree, but I won't argue that issue here—either you believe Clinton's morality disqualifies him or you don't. The same goes for arguments, equally familiar, that Clinton's cover-up constituted a "high crime" warranting removal from office.

But questions of character and legality can't entirely explain the latest resignation fad. After all, it's not as if last week's apology brought forth any new insight on those fronts. Clinton's relationship with Lewinsky, and his attempts to cover it up, were obvious long ago. It's true Clinton's apology revealed him to harbor even more self-pity than most of us had realized, but that's hardly the kind of character flaw over which we normally dismiss a president.

So what's changed? The case for resignation now hinges in good part on the perception, nearly unanimous among the experts, that the scandal has incapacitated the president by destroying his credibility. "With two years left in office and his image in tatters, Clinton looks more like a lame duck," Page writes. "Legislation on Capitol Hill has stalled. Republicans have lost their fear of his might and his mandate." Friedman and Nunn fret that Clinton won't have the moral authority to lead in time of crisis. Asks Wills: "What time or energy will [the scandal] leave for reaching the goals that followers are recruited for?" This is no minor development: Friedman, Page, Nunn, and Wills are fair-minded to a fault; ideologically, they embody the center-left component of the political establishment. Their argument carries extra weight because they aren't simply making their own moral judgments—they are also telling it like it is.

Except that they *aren't* telling it like it is. Clinton's personal approval ratings have dropped, but, as of this writing, the overwhelming majority of Americans still approve of the job he's doing as president. No, that doesn't mean the people find Clinton credible per se. But it does mean that the voters seem to believe that Clinton's lies regarding Monica Lewinsky don't mean he's any more likely to lie about policy matters; either that, or they don't care if he does. Regardless, it means Clinton can still rally the public's support—just as he did when he ordered missile strikes last week.

Granted, there's no rule that says the media has to echo public opinion; there are many times when it's the media's job to play the contrarian. But it's one thing to say that Clinton should resign because he doesn't deserve to be president and quite another to say that he should resign because *other* people believe he doesn't deserve to be president. The former is a statement of opin-

*continued on page 61*

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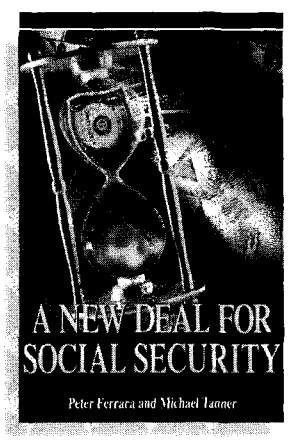


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# CORRESPONDENCE

## Liberals and nukes

**To the editors:**

Peter Beinart argues that liberal democracy makes nuclear proliferation less likely ("The Return of the Bomb," August 3). According to Beinart, the erosion of liberal democracy in India explains that government's recent decision to test nuclear weapons. But the evidence doesn't support his view.

First, while Indian democracy may have its flaws, it is not any more flawed than the unconsolidated democracies of Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa that stepped back from the nuclear brink. And, even if India under the Hindu nationalist BJP is now less liberal, regime type still does not explain why India tested nuclear weapons, because it was reportedly preparing to do so in 1995, under a more liberal regime.

Second, Beinart slights the strategic rationale for proliferation. But the Argentinean, Brazilian, and South African cases of nonproliferation do not help his case. The main threats those states faced were domestic, and nuclear weapons would have done little to help the Argentinean and Brazilian generals or the white-minority apartheid regime hold power against their own people. Conversely, India faces a serious international threat from China and Pakistan, with whom it has fought three major wars and numerous border skirmishes since 1947.

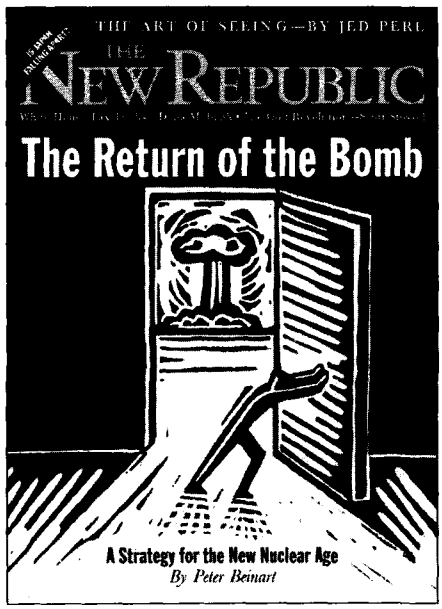
Finally, when one looks at the regime types of current nuclear powers, one is struck by how many of them are democracies (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, India, and Israel) or at least democratizing states (Russia and Pakistan) while there is only one nuclear power (the People's Republic of China) that is solidly authoritarian. So much for democracy as an obstacle to possession of nuclear weapons.

MICHAEL C. DESCH
*John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies*
*Harvard University*
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

**To the editors:**

Peter Beinart's image of India under a BJP coalition government as a failed democracy incapable of thinking and acting responsibly about nuclear deterrence badly misreads what has happened there. The mid-May nuclear tests, like a night on the town, have had their morning after. The BJP's coalition partners have remained obstreperous, the parliamentary opposition parties proved forcefully persuasive, and the country's policy intellectuals soberingly critical. Beinart's expectation that the tests would pave the way for new elections that "could give the party an outright majority" has proved wrong. The chauvinist euphoria that the tests evoked quickly dissipated.

Nor is Beinart right about discontinuity. Starting in the early 1950s with India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the first chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission, Homi Bhabha, India has pursued dual-use technology. Indira Gandhi's May 1974 test, the Narasimha Rao government's aborted tests in December 1995, and the Vajpayee government's May 1998 tests are in part the work of India's well-fed,




privileged, and hawkish scientific establishment.

Since Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Delhi Declaration in 1986, India has asked the five nuclear states to give a specific time when they will have reduced their nuclear arsenals to zero. Until nuclear weapons are phased out and banned, democratic India's case for a nuclear deterrent seems reasonable.

LLOYD I. RUDOLPH
*Department of Political Science*
*University of Chicago*
*Chicago, Illinois*

**To the editors:**

Peter Beinart's "The Return of the Bomb" is a welcome attempt to reorient U.S. policy toward controlling the demand for nuclear weapons by actively promoting liberal democracy abroad, in contrast to the usual nonproliferation campaigns that focus on limiting the supply of fissile materials. But Beinart's logic, and thus his policy recommendations, are wanting.

Beinart argues that the drive for nuclear bombs stems from an unhealthy polity. But, as Scott Sagan of Stanford University has recently argued, this is only one of three models of nuclear demand, and it hardly explains most cases of proliferation. States usually acquire the bomb to bolster their security, which accounts for both a host of mature democracies that have gone nuclear (Britain, Israel, the United States) as well as nondemocracies like the former Soviet Union and China. States may pursue or shed nuclear capability because of international norms, because they believe that that is what states, or perhaps just great powers, do—an explanation that sheds light on certain elements of France's push for the bomb and perhaps Ukraine's willingness to part with it.

Even if Beinart were right that consolidated democracies never seek the bomb, his argument is less convincing with regard to democratizing states. As elites, both new and old, compete in the emerging democratic political arena, they often find effective strategies based on nationalistic appeals, and the rhetoric recently surrounding India's nuclear tests, paralleling the nuclear aspirations of Gaullist France, makes clear the link between nationalism and nukes. The road to democracy is often long and bumpy, and Beinart's well-intentioned policy recommendations may then perversely widen, not shrink, the "nuclear zone."

RONALD R. KREBS
*Department of Political Science*
*Columbia University*
*New York, New York*

## Illiberal sports

**To the editors:**

In an ideal world, Scott Stossel's vision of golf as a multicultural, democratic Eden would make sense, but he seems to have chosen the wrong sport to expound on his theories of egalitarianism ("The Golfing of America," August 3). Stossel enumerates some breakthroughs by minorities that have taken place in formerly exclusive golfing enclaves, but it seems somewhat absurd for anyone to conclude that these small victories add up to some big social upheaval. The reality is that sports culture in this country has become more class-conscious than any other segment of society. Private golf clubs, even though they may not have exclusionary membership policies, have a way of screening out what they mistakenly perceive as "undesirable" people—meaning, in some cases, those



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with the wrong skin pigmentation—through their membership fees, some of which reach as high as $20,000 a year. Thus, what we end up with are the "proles," who must play on the overcrowded, poorly kept public courses, and the bourgeoisie, who populate the posh, beautifully manicured private clubs.

BURLING LOWREY
*Washington, D.C.*

**To the editors:**

Scott Stossel's thesis that golf's increasing popularity reflects a democratic shift in our national identity mistakes popularity for populism. Aside from polo, golf has got to be the least populist sport in the world.

Stossel is right that more people, even more black people, are playing golf. I suppose that Jim Crow's recent but incomplete demise among the nation's elite country clubs could be taken as evidence for Stossel's argument that golf is democratic, although I would think this development is more remarkable for how long and fiercely it was resisted.

More important, golf's changing demographics have hardly tempered its snob appeal. In this case, the dichotomy of golf's success is similar to that of Ralph Lauren's Polo clothing line: very popular, but popular in part because it represents the genteel class to which so many Americans aspire. Anyone who pays attention to how golf markets itself could hardly deny that golf owes its popularity to its anti-populist traditions.

GLENN KELMAN
*Berkeley, California*

## Balancing Arnett

**To the editors:**

I am at odds with Jacob Heilbrunn's criticism of journalist Peter Arnett's sympathy toward our enemies' propaganda during war time ("Vietnam Syndrome," August 3). I consider Arnett's coverage balanced rather than "morally warped"; Heilbrunn sounds more jingoist than critical of Arnett's intellectual honesty. All countries propagandize not merely outside their borders but especially within their borders during wartime. America is certainly no different. We were told that Kuwait was a deserving country for our intervention, but did the media question why Kuwait took precedence over other embattled regimes? Perhaps because of the price of a barrel of crude? I guess for Heilbrunn a good reporter should never accept the propaganda of a foreign enemy but warmly embrace American propaganda.

JOHN VONA
*Athens, Georgia*

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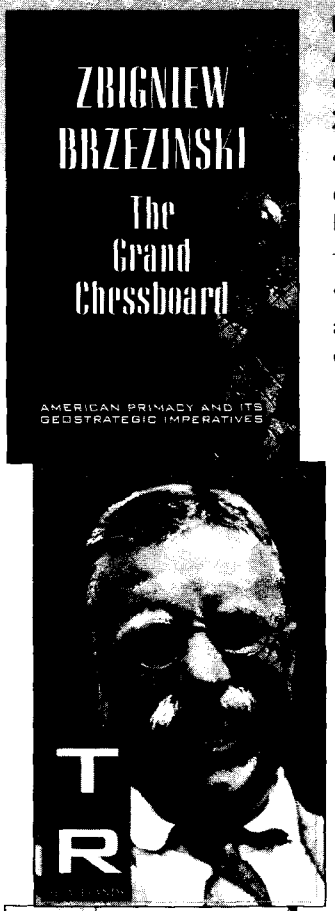


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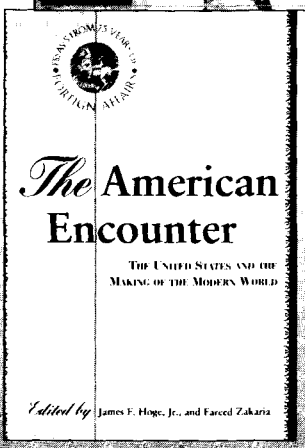


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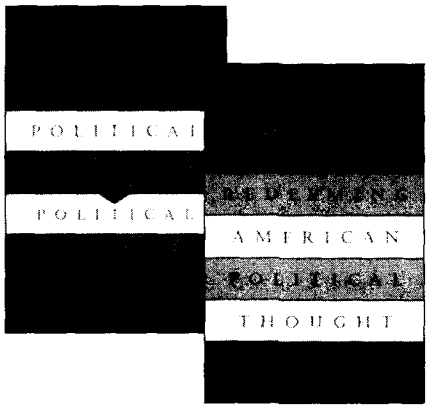


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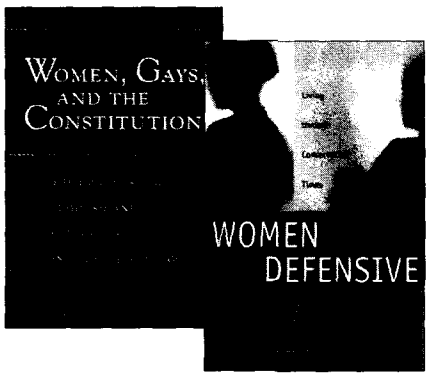


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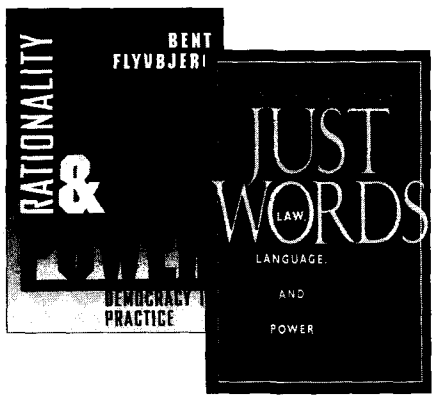


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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 14 & 21, 1998

# GET PERSONAL

On February 18, 1976, President Gerald Ford signed Executive Order 12333: "Prohibition on Assassinations. No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination." If Washington is really in a revisionist mood, as it appears to be with respect to a variety of statutes that have determined the course of our recent domestic convulsions, it might consider revising this particular inhibition on the national security policy of the United States. Executive Order 12333 represents a moral and tactical misunderstanding of the nature of at least one of the threats facing this country. We refer, of course, to the threat of terrorism, which is (this cannot be too often emphasized) a form of war.

Indeed, in the wake of the American retaliation against Osama Bin Ladin, a debate about the legitimacy of assassination has already begun. Writing in *The New York Times*, former CIA Director Robert Gates defended the ban: "How, in this most politically open society in the world, can anyone consider choosing a weapon against which we are the most vulnerable in the world?" L. Paul Bremer III, an anti-terrorism official in the Reagan administration, countered in the August 24 *Washington Post* that "under present policy, it is permissible to attack a factory in the middle of a city ... but not to target a man who is proud to have killed American civilians."

The debate needs to be informed by history. The story of the ban is an important parable of liberalism's evolution during the cold war. In 1954, the Hoover Commission reported to President Eisenhower about how to tackle Communist subversion. Consider this passage on CIA covert activities:

> Another important requirement is an aggressive covert psychological, political and paramilitary organization more effective, more unique, and if necessary, more ruthless than that employed by the enemy. No one should be permitted to stand in the way of the prompt, efficient and secure accomplishment of this mission. It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy.... There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply.

These grim words were, in a way, an expression of the idealism that infused the early anti-Communist crusade, when it was believed—by most Democrats as well as by most Republicans—that the American cause was so manifestly just, and the Soviet cause so manifestly evil, that the struggle warranted the employment even of ugly instruments. A liberal order could not always rely on liberal means to defend itself, and the moral prestige of self-defense was not yet clouded by the failure, or the abuse, of covert action, or by larger ideological shifts in American attitudes about the American military and, indeed, about America.

But then came the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam, and with them a liberal backlash against covert operations. Democratic Senator Frank Church of Idaho held hearings in 1975 that not only tarnished the CIA but also did much to undermine the legitimacy of anti-communism itself. The hearings laid bare not only the bloody anti-terrorist Phoenix Project in Vietnam but also efforts to topple or assassinate foreign personalities ranging from Congolese radical Patrice Lumumba to Cuba's Fidel Castro.

To a new Vietnam-era generation of Democrats, these unsavory tactics came to define anti-communism itself. What the early covert cold warriors saw as an instrument of liberation was now recast as a tool of oppression, and a self-defeating one at that. Liberal anti-communism gave way to liberal anti-anti-communism. Church's own addendum to his committee's final report perfectly expressed the new mentality. "The United States," he wrote, "must acquire a longer view of history. We need not be so frightened by each Russian intervention. We need not feel so compelled to react in kind to each Russian move. We have gained little, and lost a great deal, by our past policy of compulsive interventionism." America had betrayed itself; it needed to return to its historic ideals of siding with the "downtrodden and oppressed throughout the world." The implication was that the violence of the downtrodden and the oppressed was, at some level, legitimate—that anti-American violence expressed deeper political or cultural perplexities that could not, and should not, be addressed, overtly or covertly, by a military response.



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The fact that Executive Order 12333 was issued by a conservative Republican president only shows how far in Frank Church's direction the ideological center had shifted by 1976. But this was a shift too far. And the foreign policy experience during the years after Ford's order, including the Iran debacle and Soviet-Cuban forays into Africa and Central America, confirm that judgment. Jimmy Carter's mentality, which emphasized "getting on the right side of history," was totally inadequate for coping with anti-American politico-military forces that simply would not and could not be appeased.

We are confronted with such forces now. Indeed, the fall of the Soviet Empire, by throwing huge swaths of the planet into anarchy, helped to proliferate terrorist threats. Yet the official ban on assassination means that the United States operates under contradictory moral and operational imperatives. Presidents must twist words into pretzels to avoid the appearance of having tried to kill a hostile foreign leader or any particular individual for that matter. Consider George Bush during the Gulf war: "We're not in the position of targeting Saddam Hussein, but no one will weep for him when he is gone." After the Clinton administration's cruise missile attack on Osama Bin Ladin's infrastructure in Afghanistan and Sudan, officials uttered similar weasel words. On ABC's "This Week," Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said: "We do not think that just focusing on one single individual this way proves anything."

Of course, it might prove that Americans are determined to make the world unsafe for those who would make the world unsafe for Americans. Furthermore, this disingenuousness does not come cheap—and the price is also paid by bystanders abroad. When America uses "standoff" weapons such as cruise missiles to retaliate against the camps and factories of a terrorist like Bin Ladin (or ship-to-shore shelling to retaliate against terrorists in the Lebanese mountains during the 1980s), the risk of "collateral damage" is higher than it would be if we targeted the individual himself using more accurate means such as airplanes, helicopters, or, yes, assassins.

Obviously, there are legitimate objections to repealing the executive order. But it seems misplaced to worry, as Robert Gates does, that assassinating foreign terrorists would lead to open season on America. Indeed, if we continue to target areas rather than individuals, we risk creating even more genuinely aggrieved people—the victims of "collateral damage"—who will be available as new recruits for terrorist groups. The bottom line is that there is little American policy can do to fine-tune the membership level of terrorist groups such as Osama Bin Ladin's; certainly, we can never get on the right side of history as he and his followers view it. In one form or another, such groups threaten us indefinitely.

When you kill a terrorist, you are not like a terrorist. In its war on terrorism—or rather, in its response to terrorism's war on America—the United States must recover its moral clarity and its tactical flexibility. It requires an alternative to both the hubris of the Hoover Commission and the self-flagellation of the Church committee. You might call it self-confidence. •

# NOTEBOOK

**BEST BUDS:** Forced apart when Bimbroglio broke out in January, Bill Clinton and Vernon Jordan have been renewing their old friendship since the president arrived in Martha's Vineyard. Jordan was the first to greet all three Clintons at the airport, and the president celebrated his birthday at Jordan's house. Touching. But wait a minute. Didn't *The New York Times* report that Jordan maintained that, before he tried to secure a job for Monica Lewinsky, he had asked Clinton if the president had had an affair with her? And didn't Jordan claim that Clinton said "never, no way," thereby giving Jordan the impression it was kosher to assist the intern, even if she was being subpoenaed in the Paula Jones case? And, by doing so, didn't Clinton put Jordan in a world of legal jeopardy? Either Jordan's the most forgiving friend of all time, or he has some problems with the truth himself.

**POWELL OF PERSUASION:** The nation has lost a great jurist, former Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell, who died August 25 at the age of 90. As *The New York Times* obituary noted, Powell, who all but invented the diversity rationale for affirmative action in the 1978 *Bakke* case, was "a political moderate with an aversion to heated rhetoric and doctrinal rigidity." But, if Powell was a force for moderation on social issues, his influence on the economic debates of his time was rather different. In 1971, just two months before President Nixon nominated him to the Court, Powell, then an attorney in private practice, wrote a long memorandum to a friend at the United States Chamber of Commerce. He warned that "the American economic system is under broad attack" from a movement led by Ralph Nader—a movement abetted by college professors, the media, and even politicians, who "stampede to support almost any legislation related to 'consumerism' or the 'environment.'" Powell urged businessmen "to recognize that the ultimate issue may be survival—survival of what we call the free enterprise system," and he recommended that they fund sympathetic foundations and professors so as to create a conservative intellectual establishment that could counter the liberal one. As TNR senior editor John B. Judis writes in his upcoming book (tentatively titled *Democracy and the American Century*): "Powell's memorandum was meant to be circulated privately among chamber officials, but it found an eager readership among the Washington lobbyists and among CEOs at company headquarters. It even made its way to beer magnate Joseph Coors.... It caused the Chamber of Commerce to change course, but, on a broader level, it convinced businessmen like Coors that they had to become involved in national politics and in Washington policymaking." This, then, is Powell's ironic legacy: His words helped justify not only a key institution of modern liberalism—affirmative action—but also some of the key institutions of the backlash against modern liberalism. •



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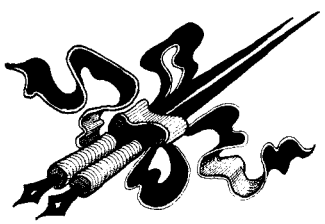
## THE HARD QUESTIONS

# WHO IS US?

*By Ronald Steel*

For all its exploration of the horror of war, *Saving Private Ryan*, the popular new film about World War II, is ultimately a celebration of national pride and patriotism. Viewers come away feeling proud of the "good war," of the brave American soldiers, and of the country they fought for. And, whatever its cinematic virtues, the movie's success largely stems from the fact that it taps into an unacknowledged vein of national longing. Audiences embrace this film about a war that ended more than 50 years ago because it commemorates a sense of national unity that is being eroded from our lives.

Patriotism, citizenship, and cultural identity used to go together. Americans came from every part of the globe, but they tried to meld what they had once been into the new culture they entered. The "melting pot" was, to some extent, a myth, and it had a lot of lumps; but, for better or worse, it was the national ideal. And it resulted in a remarkably unified country, despite the diverse origins of the people who composed it. Being an American meant not simply holding a passport but sharing a cultural identity and affirming a political loyalty.



Today, for many people, this notion seems quaint and even undesirable. There is no single cause for this. Rather, it stems from a variety of causes—particularly immigration, multiculturalism, and globalization. But the cumulative effect has been to undermine the bedrock of national cohesion and identity. And, as a result, the United States may be undergoing a transformation into the world's first post-national society with consequences that we cannot foresee.

While immigration is an old American story to which nearly all of us ultimately owe our presence here, both its pace and its nature have changed dramatically since Congress lowered the bar three decades ago. In 1996, the latest year for which figures are available, some 1.2 million people immigrated to the United States—an estimated one-quarter of them illegally. Of every ten people living here, one was born elsewhere. Almost half of the new arrivals come from seven "developing" (i.e., poor) countries: Mexico, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, China, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. Although concentrated in major cities like New York (where more than a third of the population is foreign-born), Los Angeles, and Miami, the effects of this immigration tide are felt throughout the society.

What makes these figures significant in this case is not so much their numbers, or even their nature (although the vast majority are unskilled and require major public support), as it is the setting in which they take place. That setting is dominated by the phenomenon we call multiculturalism. It rejects the notion of a single American culture, however complexly defined, in favor of a multitude of subcultures. In emphasizing the parts, it downgrades, and by implication denigrates, the whole.

Insofar as multiculturalism encourages people to take pride in their ethnic and cultural origins, it can enrich the nation even as it does the individual. But, in celebrating differences, multiculturalism can also turn them into barriers. It leads people to draw a sharp distinction between the "homeland" to which they psychologically belong and the "host country" in which they work and have obtained citizenship. It promotes group loyalties at the expense of a larger national identity. And, in doing so, it undermines the very notion of an "indivisible" nation.

One sees this everywhere: at universities, where students are divided into ethnic and cultural groups to receive their commencement degrees; in hiring practices, where ethnicity is the primary consideration; and even in the making of foreign policy. Last March, for example, the Los Angeles-based Pacific Council on International Policy held a large symposium titled "Advancing the International Interests of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos." The implication was that, even when it comes to foreign relations, Americans should think of themselves as part of an ethnic group rather than as individual citizens whose primary identity is with the larger nation.

One could argue about whether this is good or bad. But unmistakably it cheapens the traditional notion of citizenship. This is happening for other reasons as well. American citizenship is much easier to get and harder to lose than it used to be. Previously, voting in a foreign election or serving in a foreign army would often result in the loss of citizenship, even for a native-born American. Today, as a result of court rulings, that is no longer necessarily the case. A person can even hold political office in a foreign country, as a New Jersey city councilman recently tried to do when he ran for Senate in his native Colombia. In each place, he explained, "I would be representing Colombians in the United States."

You can obtain U.S. citizenship because you want to buy an American television network (as did Rupert Murdoch), or to bring in your relatives, or as an insurance policy even while continuing to live in your native land. Most of the countries with large numbers of immigrants in the United States, including Mexico, now allow, and even encourage, dual citizenship. Some people collect several passports. This may make frontiers and border checks seem quaintly outmoded. It is already helping to turn U.S. citizenship into a passport of convenience.

Divided loyalties are easier to juggle these days



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because of the revolution in travel and communications. With cheap flights and low phone rates it is possible for millions of immigrants—as it is for their American-born children—to live physically and psychologically in two worlds. Today, immigrating to the United States in effect means never really having to say goodbye. And it can mean never really feeling a loyalty to the "host country."

Meanwhile, globalization, while annihilating time, distance, borders, and corporate identities, is having a profound effect on the cultural and political loyalties of American-born citizens. For an international class of managers who flit restlessly across frontiers and whose primary allegiances are to themselves and their current employers, it makes the very notion of a single national identity seem anachronistic.

Maybe this is the way the world is heading. Maybe the United States is the first nation to enter the world of the twenty-first century: one without borders, without flags and heroes, and without loyalties. Maybe it doesn't matter that it is becoming harder for us to define who we are as a people, what we believe in, and what we would fight for. And, if so, maybe that is why Americans this month are celebrating lowly Private Ryan for reminding us that there was a time when these things did matter. •

**Reno is right on special prosecutors.**

# SUPERIOR LOGIC

*By Erez Kalir*

Virtually no one seems to believe that Attorney General Janet Reno is doing the right thing by refusing to seek an independent counsel to investigate alleged Clinton-Gore fund-raising improprieties. Two of her own subordinates, FBI Director Louis Freeh and career prosecutor Charles La Bella, have charged her with recklessly interpreting the law. *The New York Times* has opined that "[e]veryone in Washington knows what the law requires" and that Reno ought to head back to law school. Meanwhile, a House committee just voted along party lines to serve Reno with a contempt citation for her failure to turn over Freeh's and La Bella's confidential reports.

But Reno is right, albeit not for the reason she's stated publicly. Although nobody seems to have noticed, the Supreme Court last year silently eviscerated the constitutionality of the law Reno has been accused of defying.

In a 1988 decision, *Morrison* v. *Olson*, the Court broadly upheld the constitutionality of the statute that established the Office of Independent Counsel. Theodore Olson, a Reagan administration official, had challenged the very existence of Independent Counsel Alexia Morrison on the grounds that she was a "principal" officer of the executive branch and, as such, should have been nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate—instead of being named by a three-judge panel as the statute directed. The Court held, however, that independent counsels are "inferior" officers who may be appointed by judges or cabinet secretaries.

Nonsense, Justice Antonin Scalia retorted. In a lone dissent, he pointed out that, for an officer to be inferior, he must have a *superior*—which an independent counsel manifestly doesn't. As a practical matter, he argued, no one can control an independent counsel, and therefore this "inferior" officer is superior to everyone.

Now, however, the Court has embraced the Scalia argument it once rejected. In the little-noticed *Edmond* opinion, written last year by Scalia and endorsed by all nine justices, the Court held that, henceforth, inferior officers would be defined as "officers whose work is directed and supervised at some level by others who were appointed by presidential nomination with the advice and consent of the Senate." Although the Court didn't give a fixed definition of "directed and supervised," it did list three attributes of a bona fide inferior officer: he is required to comply with uniform procedural rules, his decisions are reviewable, and he may be fired without cause.

Obviously, the independent counsel doesn't meet these criteria. Must he comply with uniform Justice Department procedures? Not if doing so would be inconsistent with the purposes for which his office was created. Are his decisions reviewable? Not by anyone in the executive branch. Is the counsel himself removable without cause? No, for cause only, and even then he can appeal his removal to a federal court (which can reinstate him). Is there some other way that the attorney general, or anyone else, "directs and supervises" the independent counsel? Current law gives him "full power and independent authority to exercise all investigative and prosecutorial functions of the Department of Justice, the Attorney General, and any other officer or employee of the Department of Justice" when he acts within the scope of his inquiry.

Admittedly, *Edmond* did not specifically overturn *Morrison*. But the parties in *Edmond* didn't challenge *Morrison*, and for the Court to have explicitly done so itself would have opened the justices to charges of judicial activism and political meddling. A direct challenge to *Morrison* may soon be forthcoming, however, especially if the president's lawyers follow the advice of Yale Law School professor Akhil Amar, who recommends such a strategy in a forthcoming *Harvard Law Review* article.

That process could take months, or years. But this doesn't mean Reno can ignore *Edmond*. Like all government officers, Reno has sworn to support the Constitution. If she concludes that *Edmond* has silently overruled *Morrison*, and that the independent counsel statute now has no constitutional basis, she may rightfully feel



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bound by her oath not to give that statute full effect. She could decide that the statute is so clearly unconstitutional that she will not enforce it (a position Reno has taken with respect to another statute, which purports to abolish the Miranda rule). Or she could decide that the statute has fallen under a constitutional pall and that she will apply it only if all other options are exhausted (not the case in the campaign finance context, since Congress or Reno's department can conduct their own investigations). Either way, by exercising her constitutional judgment, Reno would be following in the footsteps of her distinguished predecessor Robert Jackson, who refused to prosecute Drew Pearson and Robert Allen because of Jackson's constitutional misgivings about the statute involved. (He, too, paid a political price: the decision cost him support upon his nomination to the Supreme Court.)

Yet *Edmond* carries a deeper message for the attorney general. At its core, the case should remind Reno (and her critics) that it is principal officers who must govern their inferiors, not vice versa. The Ethics in Government Act does not vest prosecutorial discretion in the director of the FBI or in Justice Department underlings. It leaves to the attorney general alone the decision as to whether she has received "sufficient" information to initiate a preliminary investigation under the act. While there have been times in our nation's history when the director of the FBI held sway in the Justice Department, and still others when the attorney general followed the directions of his minions, these were not DOJ's finest hours. If Janet Reno has read *Edmond* carefully, she should bar any inferiors from seizing control of her department—be they independent counsels or those who favor their appointment.

EREZ KALIR is finishing his studies at Yale Law School.

**Jesse plays the Chelsea card.**

# FAMILY THERAPY

*By Jason Zengerle*

"I intend to reclaim my family life for my family," the president of the United States insisted in his August 17 sorta culpa speech. "It's nobody's business but ours." Yet, just days later, the inevitable "Clinton in Crisis" issue of *Newsweek* took America "inside the family." The story painted a poignant picture of the Clintons, already reconnecting with one another even before the president's grand jury appearance. Hillary and Chelsea sought guidance from Scripture in the living room. "I love my dad. I understand. I can cope," Chelsea remarked. Mother and daughter then joined the president upstairs, where all three prayed and hugged. Who's the fly-on-the-wall reporter who provided this heartwarming gloss on the first family's oh-so-private business? None other than the Reverend Jesse Jackson, whose access to the White House family quarters has seemed to grow in direct proportion to the depth of Bill Clinton's political and legal predicaments.

It certainly seems like an odd alliance. For years, relations between Jackson and Clinton have ebbed and flowed. In 1992, Clinton responded to an erroneous report that Jackson planned to endorse Senator Tom Harkin's presidential bid by calling him "double-crossing" and "back-stabbing." Later in that campaign, after Clinton had publicly slighted Jackson as a way to prove his New Democrat bona fides, Jackson fumed that Clinton was "nothing but an appetite." While the personal enmity waned during Clinton's first term, Jackson was still a political wild card. In 1996, he led a demonstration outside the White House to protest the welfare reform bill.

But now, thanks to Bimbroglio, two of Washington's greatest opportunists have come together. For Jackson, the Clintons' crisis is an opportunity to gain media attention and reinforce his position as the leader of the political constituency most loyal to the president: African Americans. For Clinton, Jackson is the perfect spokesman: a man of the cloth who can recast a story of alleged perjury or obstruction of justice into a family drama about faith and forgiveness. Even better—thanks to the minister-penitent privilege, Jackson is likely subpoena-proof.

What makes Jackson really valuable, though, is that he allows Clinton to play the Chelsea card. The public likes Chelsea and feels sorry for her, but the White House could never exploit that directly by having the carefully protected first daughter plead her wayward dad's case publicly. Only a surrogate could make her an issue. Enter Jesse Jackson.

It all began in the very first days of the Lewinsky scandal, when the Clintons invited Jackson to the White House to watch the Super Bowl. They asked him to call Chelsea at Stanford to see how she was holding up. The next morning, Jackson embarked on a media marathon to talk about the Clinton family. On "Today" he pronounced Bill and Hillary "upbeat" and Chelsea "devoted to her father and so close to her mother." On "CBS This Morning" he said the Clintons were "a strong family." He told the Associated Press of Chelsea's "inner strength and . . . maturity." On "Larry King," he eulogized "the strength of Hillary"; Chelsea was "totally believing her father."

In the current, most critical stage of the scandal, Jackson has once again rushed to the first family's aid. On the Saturday before Clinton's Monday confessional, Jackson comforted and counseled Hillary, whose husband, the White House says, had just told her for the first time that he had had an affair with Lewinsky. On



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Sunday, Jackson invited J. Philip Wogaman and Walter Shropshire, two reverends from the Methodist church the president and first lady attend, onto his CNN show "Both Sides." The three clergymen discussed "the God factor" in the scandal and offered politico-biblical justifications for Clinton's behavior. "We have this awesome case of Samson with all of this strength, and yet the special prosecutor, I suppose, would have locked him up," Jackson ventured. "King David did something that was much worse than anything President Clinton is alleged to have done," Wogaman said, "and King David, if I read my Bible correctly, was not impeached."

Jackson stayed on CNN for a special "Town Hall" show on which he resumed reassuring the public that, despite the tough times, all was fundamentally well within the Clinton family. "The president is embarrassed," Jackson said. "It may explain some of the hedging. I think he would rather face all of these reporters, tonight, than to face Hillary one-on-one with those conversation[s] and his daughter." He then pleaded with the American public to view Clinton not as the president but as a man. "Politicians tend to see President Clinton as an object, as a competitor, and journalists tend to see him as an object," Jackson said. "But Hillary Clinton and Chelsea see him as a subject, as a husband, as a father."

JESSE JACKSON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Jackson then left the "Town Hall" show still in progress and went to the White House, where, he would later reveal, he had been summoned by Hillary to talk to Chelsea. What happened next was obviously deeply, deeply private, and nobody's business but the Clintons' own—until, that is, Jackson began providing details to "CBS This Morning," ABC's "Good Morning America," National Public Radio, and "Larry King Live." "We have seen the Clintons in triumph and we have seen them in trauma," Jackson wrote in *Newsweek*. "But throughout it all, we have seen them together." Says one White House aide: "I'm grateful that the role Reverend Jackson's playing has been so personal.... He's been very helpful in providing the human face to all this."

In his guise as the Clintons' spiritual adviser, Jackson has most frequently been compared to Billy Graham. But the comparison misses a critical difference between the two—and how they were used by the presidents they advised. When Graham was in his thirties, he angered Harry Truman by blabbing to the press about a meeting they'd had. As Graham writes in his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, "I vowed to myself it would never happen again if I ever was given access to a person of rank or influence."

And it didn't. Graham, for all of his attention-seeking, never related specifics of what he had seen, said, or heard during the time he spent with presidents. Moreover, the presidents he counseled were oddly protective of him. Richard Nixon, who was probably closer to Graham than any other president, actually kept him from the White House during Watergate, apparently to stop Graham from offering absolution that Nixon knew he didn't deserve and that would only serve to make Graham look foolish later.

With Jackson, apparently, Clinton has no such qualms. But, even if he did, Jackson would probably ignore them. Thanks to the scandal, Jackson is back in the public spotlight he so obviously craves. It was not so long ago that people wondered, "What would happen if Jesse Jackson held a press conference and nobody came?" Now, as Jackson once said in a memorable "Saturday Night Live" skit, "the question is moot." He usually salts his Bimbroglio press appearances with a mention of his latest education conference or his march through Appalachia to draw attention to rural poverty. Last week, on MSNBC, Brian Williams even asked Jackson what he thought of Clinton's decision to attack terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan. The normally dovish Jackson voiced his wholehearted support for the strikes.

Of course, there is always the possibility that Clinton is making his erstwhile ideological enemy political



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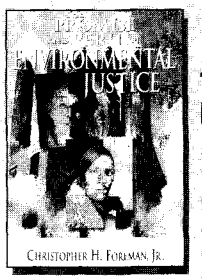


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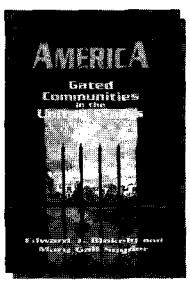


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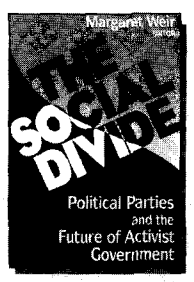


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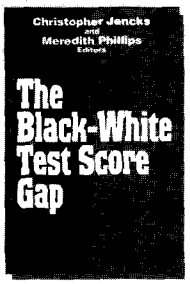


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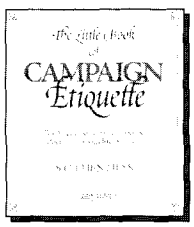


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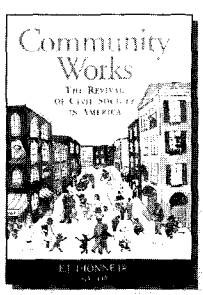


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promises in exchange for his family counseling services. In the run-up to the 1996 campaign, Clinton dangled political carrots, like his administration's continued support of affirmative action, to dissuade Jackson from mounting a primary challenge against him. But Jackson may be warier this time. After all, if Bimbroglio proves anything, it's that Clinton's promises aren't worth that much. •

**A Democratic case for resignation.**

# SWEET GOOD-BYE

*By Timothy Noah*

"Where is the Democrats' Barry Goldwater?" a Famous Television Journalist asked me recently. What he meant was: Where is the Democrat who has the guts to say what the late senator from Arizona said to Vice President Gerald Ford in August 1974 after the release of the "smoking gun" tape proving Nixon's involvement in the Watergate cover-up? To wit: "The best thing he can do for the country is to get the hell out of the White House." Goldwater said essentially the same thing to Nixon's face in a meeting between Nixon and Republican congressional leaders shortly before Nixon resigned. So far, no leading congressional Democrat is known to have said anything like this to Al Gore, Bill Clinton, or anyone else at the White House, not even since Clinton's admission that he more or less committed perjury in his Paula Jones case deposition.

That isn't because congressional Democrats disagree with the commentariat's outrage at Clinton's misbehavior. (And, though Clinton's alleged misdeeds fall well short of Nixon's, Kenneth Starr's forthcoming report to Congress seems likely to document an obstruction of justice allegation.) It's because these Democrats are terrified that what happened to congressional Republicans in 1974 will happen to them in this fall's midterm elections. The likelihood, though, is that it won't.

The congressional election that followed Nixon's resignation was, for Republicans, a legendary fiasco. The Democrats scored a net increase of 49 seats in the House and 4 in the Senate; it was the biggest loss of House seats for any sitting president's party since 1958, a recession year. The incoming Democratic freshmen (including Tom Downey of New York, Tim Wirth of Colorado, and Henry Waxman of California) were nicknamed "Watergate babies" in recognition of their presumed debt to Nixon's humiliation. The Republican incumbents they defeated were, by implication, Watergate casualties, killed off by their allegiance to a disgraced party.

The relentless logic of the Republicans' 1974 experience, as it applies to Democrats running in the midst of Bimbroglio, would seem to be: Don't let Bill Clinton resign in disgrace. Criticize his personal behavior, as one must, and then move on. Don't encourage voters to view the Democratic Party as the scandal party. Hence the reluctance of Democratic leaders like Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle to imitate Goldwater (or then-Republican leaders Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and Representative John Rhodes of Arizona, who were less colorful but no less firm in pushing Nixon out).

But what if widely held beliefs about the centrality of Nixon's resignation to the 1974 election results are wrong? In fact, Watergate's precise role in the Republican debacle is not clear. A few political scientists, after scrutinizing their regression analyses, have concluded that Watergate played no role at all. That may be ascribing a bit too much explanatory power to social science. But, certainly, a widely forgotten factor—the economy—played at least as large a role in the election as Watergate did. The 1973 Arab oil embargo led to long lines at gas pumps and double-digit inflation; unemployment, too, went up in 1973 and stayed high through 1974. In 1973, disposable income began two decades of stagnation.

Today's boom, in contrast, seems to be quite durable (unless you think Clinton's fall would trigger a stock market crash). Consequently, 1998's congressional incumbents are surely less vulnerable to challenges from putative "Bimbroglio babies" than their 1974 forebears were to challenges from Watergate babies (who might just as easily be called "stagflation babies"). Says Everett C. Ladd of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research: "Watergate may have had almost nothing to do with the 1974 elections."

Another possibility is that Watergate had a profound effect on the 1974 election, but Nixon's resignation did not. As the University of California at San Diego's Gary Jacobson, a widely cited scholar of congressional elections, explains, the crucial events that sealed the congressional Republicans' fate may have occurred months before the resignation. The Senate Watergate hearings in 1973 had given a heads-up to ambitious young Democrats that 1974 would be an excellent year to run for Congress, and Nixon's approval ratings confirmed that inkling by hovering at a dismal 20 to 30 percent from late 1973 until his resignation. By contrast, Jacobson writes in his book, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, "Republicans expected it to be a bad year, and candidates and activists refused to extend themselves in a losing cause." A measure of this was the extraordinary amount of money Democratic challengers were able to raise; in 1974, the average Democratic challenger spent three times as much as the average Republican challenger.

It might seem that Bimbroglio, which has been kicking along since January, presented no more sudden a windfall to Republican activists than Watergate did



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to Democratic activists in 1974. But there's a key difference: whereas Watergate (again, surely in combination with a sagging economy) dragged Nixon's poll ratings down early in the election cycle, Bimbroglio has yet to drag Clinton's down at all. A *Washington Post*-ABC News poll conducted August 19–21 showed Clinton's approval rating at 66 percent, a whisker short of his all-time high; true, only 28 percent said he was "honest and trustworthy," but voters have never thought highly of Clinton as a person (as opposed to Clinton as president). The popularity not only of Clinton but also of most congressional incumbents of both parties has deterred challengers. As of this writing, 95 House members—57 Republicans and 38 Democrats—face no major party opposition in November. This suggests that incumbent Democrats fearful of tarnishing Clinton's (and their party's) image by calling on him to resign are being too skittish. In many instances, it's simply too late for strong opponents to emerge.

But what about turnout? Won't the loss of a popular leader discourage the Democratic faithful from going to the polls? After all, low-turnout midterm elections are all about "energizing your base." In 1974, voter turnout for the House elections fell to 35.9 percent, down from 43.5 percent in the previous midterm election year of 1970. The falloff is widely attributed to Republican voters' disgust with Nixon. But there doesn't seem to be much evidence that Republican apathy grew appreciably after Nixon resigned. Rather, it was President Gerald Ford's blanket pardon for Nixon, announced on September 8, 1974, that seems to have turned Republicans off, according to polls. After the pardon, Ford's own approval rating dropped 15 points, practically overnight.

Perhaps what really enraged the public about the Nixon pardon was the suspicion that Nixon secretly cut a deal with Ford before leaving office. Indeed, a September 1974 poll commissioned by *Time* magazine showed that 71 percent of Americans did not believe that Ford had told them the whole truth about the pardon. The pardon probably cost Ford the 1976 election.

Al Gore might avoid a similar fate by making any pardon-for-resignation trade explicit and public. My fellow Americans, he could say, I cut this deal out of compassion and a desire for closure. It's certainly reasonable for the president to fear that Ken Starr aims not just to remove him from office but to install him in a jail cell. By crafting, in public, a golden parachute for Clinton, Gore would be doing both the president and the country a favor; there's even a decent chance both would recognize it as such. Surely a suitably swift and humane resignation is better than the alternative—for Democrats endlessly to defend Clinton on the theory, implicit or explicit, that his behavior wasn't "very" criminal.

TIMOTHY NOAH is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

**The essence of Clinton's disgrace.**

# LIES THAT MATTER

*By Andrew Sullivan*

There can be little doubt that if Bill Clinton were a prime minister in a parliamentary system he would no longer be in office. It is a convention in British politics, for example, that a minister can survive even the tawdriest of scandals, or direst of careers, but, if he clearly lies to the House of Commons, he has no option but to resign. A lie in this context is not merely a hedging of the truth, a ducking of a question, or an act of omission—because the Brits have long understood that these kinds of lies are sadly inextricable from much of political life. What a lie here means is an untruth spoken directly and knowingly in a formal capacity to the political nation.

The reason for this convention is a simple one. If a politician is capable of self-consciously lying to his peers and electorate, then nothing he says from that point on can be reliably believed. Once that happens, politics becomes impossible because trust has been destroyed, both at home and abroad. Domestic politics is as threatened as national security. It doesn't matter what the lie is about. What matters is that it is premeditated and clearly proven. What matters is that the politician knows it is a lie when he says it, and operates not from a position of political engagement, but from political dishonesty.

Bill Clinton has done this in two clear, formal contexts. He did it in the deposition in the Paula Jones case, under oath, an oath as solemn and as binding as his oath of office. He did it from the White House on a presidential podium, wagging his finger for emphasis. He did it to his Cabinet and directly urged others to lie on his behalf. And he lied again when he said he didn't lie or direct others into bald-faced deception.

Of course, the United States does not have a parliamentary system, and so there is greater leeway for an American president. There is the leeway of apology, the leeway of forgiveness, and the leeway of impeachment. Having botched the first two, the president must soon engage the latter. The hearings will surely consume the nation in a marathon of distasteful distraction from which any honorable person would wish to rescue us. Bill Clinton is not such an honorable person, which is why it is unlikely he will quit. But that is not to say he shouldn't.

The defenses of the president, weak from the beginning, weaker as every day passes, are on the verge of collapse. We are told that this is a lie about sex, and everyone lies about sex. Well, to begin with, not everyone.



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And not everyone's sex life is conducted in a business office with an employee scarcely out of college. Most lies about sex, after all, are lies about equal, consensual, private matters, not about public acts of exploitation. We have been instructed by third-wave feminists that, since the Lewinsky affair was obviously consensual, it was not exploitative. But is there any greater disproportion of power than that between an intern and the president of the United States?

And, second, this argument misses what makes Bill Clinton different from most people. For the majority of us, white lies or discretion about sex are occasional digressions from general, everyday honesty. They are exceptions that prove the rule. But, with Clinton, the lies about sex are not exceptions to the general rule; they are the rule. They are of a seamless piece with his lies about virtually everything else.

The Lewinsky saga, in this sense, is a distillation of everything we already knew about Clinton, the purest proof yet of the moral nihilism that drives him forward. From the beginning, Clinton has lied with indiscriminate abandon. He has lied about genocide and he has lied about his golf scores. Every label he has attached to himself, every public position he has taken, has smacked of opportunism, not conviction, self-interested deceit, not public-interested candor. Very little of it can be taken at face value. He claims to be a feminist and yet treats the women around him as fools, tokens, or sexual objects. He claimed to be a New Democrat and yet embarked first and foremost on instituting semi-socialized medicine. He claimed to be a social liberal, and yet he signed the Defense of Marriage Act and boasted about it on Christian talk radio. He claimed to be in favor of making abortion "safe, legal, and rare," and yet he vetoed a measure to outlaw the most violent of late-term procedures. He claimed he wanted to end welfare as we know it and to balance the budget, and yet he failed to do either until forced to on Republican terms. Like a Visa card, he is everywhere you want him to be, which is to say he is nowhere reliable, nowhere dependable, and nowhere in the slightest bit honest.

And, more important, he has never taken responsibility for any of this. In Clinton's moral universe, the truth is whatever he can get away with, and a lie is always somebody else's fault. He therefore hardly struggles with the truth, because, where there is no responsibility, there can be no struggle. He can analogize the Bosnian conflict as another Holocaust, take a poll to see whether he should intervene, stand by while tens of thousands of civilians are murdered, and then take credit for world peace when he sends American soldiers to police the aggressor's gains. He can publicly weep for people with AIDS, and empathize with homosexuals, and then sign a bill that would have thrown every HIV-positive person out of the military and almost double the rate of gay discharges from the service. He can advocate women's rights, and then expose himself to a stranger, and molest a distraught staffer in the Oval Office. (Yes, I believe Paula Jones and Kathleen Willey.) And then he can go to gay fund-raisers, and NOW rallies, and Bosnia itself, and pretend he is still a crusader for morality, civil rights, and peace, all the while corrupting anyone who comes into contact with him along the way.

The notion that this characterological concern should be separate from a consideration of whether Bill Clinton can "do the job" of president betrays a misunderstanding of democratic politics itself. It is not a business. The president is not, and can never be, a CEO because a democratic nation is not, and can never be, a company. The United States is not making a product or selling a commodity. It is an association of laws and customs, the maintenance of which is an exacting and delicate and always moral task. The first responsibility of the person presiding over such an enterprise is not to achieve growth of 2.5 percent but to ensure the legitimacy of the system itself. In this fundamental task, Clinton has clearly not only failed; he has deliberately broken his oath of office. Clinton's attitude toward the law has not been how he can best uphold it but how he can best evade it. His attitude toward democratic political discourse has been not how he can address the issues honestly but how he can best dissemble, obfuscate, and lie. At some point, such a person does not merely demean himself; he demeans and threatens the entire system of government he is elected to defend.

Yes, we knew this before—and he was reelected anyway. But this reelection was based on a spurious gamble: that "results" matter more than political character, that a culture of deceit can be outweighed by an accumulation of prosperity. What we did not count on in 1996 was what making such a moral compromise would further do to the character of the man in question. What our moral insouciance did was ratchet up the scale even further, allowing Clinton to believe he could get away with virtually anything. Which is why, buoyed by the polls, he shamelessly hustled shifty businessmen through the White House in return for campaign dollars, blithely saw Webb Hubbell paid handsomely while staying silent in the Whitewater investigation, and cavalierly carried on an affair in his very office with a lovesick intern. These actions were the actions of a man who had come to believe he was beyond the moral measure of anyone else and beyond the capacity of anyone to catch him. So, when he was finally caught, it was little surprise that his response was not contrition but outrage. How dare we hold him accountable now, when we have let him off so many times before?

And, yes, the Republican alternative is truly horrifying. But there comes a point at which the lesser-of-two-evils argument is a form of moral corruption itself. Just because bigots and fanatics on the far right loathe Clinton for the wrong reasons doesn't mean it is wrong to loathe Clinton for the right reasons. Just because the far right has brazenly co-opted the language of morality to cloak its own vicious prejudices doesn't mean that liberals and decent conservatives can't use a moral discourse to criticize Clinton himself. In fact, the president's own



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moral degeneracy, by which I mean not his sexual weaknesses but his preference for ends over means, and lies over truth, has fatally co-opted many of the people associated with him. It has largely destroyed the credibility of many American feminists, and it has made much of the gay establishment look cynical when it hasn't looked craven. And this pattern looks only set to continue, until much that is important in American politics—the defense of a secular civic culture, of women's equality, of a genuinely liberal racial politics, of homosexual dignity—will come to be tainted irretrievably with the shadow of Clinton's insincerity. How many elections will Clinton have thrown to the far right, I wonder, how many religious fanatics will he have lent credibility to, how many women will he have abused, and gay soldiers will he have fired, before liberals summon up the gumption to say "Enough"?

My own bet is that we still don't know the half of it: The Starr report might contain information about intimidation of witnesses and encouragement of deceit that might make our hair curl. Yes, it's petty business. Sex is often a petty business. So is money-grubbing commerce, as Whitewater surely showed. But honesty is not a petty principle. Without at least a shred of honesty in the highest official in the land, no system of democratic government can withstand the cynicism and disengagement that will soon overwhelm it. If Clinton is proven to have lied in the most cynical and shameless fashion, and then allowed to get away with it, the damage he has already done to the polity will be close to indelible.

Clinton is a cancer on the culture, a cancer of cynicism, narcissism, and deceit. At some point, not even the most stellar of economic and social records is worth the price of such a cancer metastasizing even further. He should go. And it is a measure of the damage he has already wrought that this should even be a question. •

**The ideology behind terrorism.**

# UNHOLY WAR

*By Steven Emerson*

President Clinton was right: the military strikes in Afghanistan and the Sudan were against terrorists, not Islam. But he avoided a larger issue—the growth of militant ideology among leading religious clerics and Islamist organizations, in particular those headquartered in the West. It is the same theology behind suicide bombings against civilians in Israel, machine-gun attacks on tourists in Egypt, and the bombing of the World Trade Center building. Unless it is recognized and challenged, militant Islamic fundamentalism will continue to create future Osama Bin Ladins—no matter how many missiles the U.S. military fires.

There are, to be sure, many variants of Islam—just as there are variants of Judaism and Christianity. And, like radical Jewish fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism represents a minority wing that would impose religious doctrine from an earlier historical era. Yet, unlike Christianity and Judaism, Islam has yet to undergo a reformation or enlightenment—and that allows some clerics to claim religious justification for violence.

Which they do. In books sold and distributed throughout the Islamic world, the founding theologians of Islamic fundamentalism—Sayyed Qutb and Abul A'la Maududi—declare that all Muslims have a duty to spread the domain of Islam by any means necessary, including force. In the 1980s, leading Islamic clerics like Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran mandated violence to conquer "the land of the infidel." Tapes of their exhortations to violence sell vigorously even today—although there's no shortage of living clerics to sound the same cry. In recent years, Sheik Hassan al-Turabi of Sudan, Sheik Yusuf al-Qardawi of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheik Ahmed Noufal of Jordan, Sheik Ahmed al-Qattan of Kuwait, Mohammed Abu Faris of Jordan, and Sheik Rachid Ghannouchi of the Tunisian an-Nahda have all endorsed the legitimacy of violent jihad against the "enemies of Islam." Sheik Tantawi, the head of Egypt's al-Azhar University, widely considered a "moderate," has openly endorsed the legitimacy of Islamic "martyrdom" operations—specifically, blowing oneself up among one's enemies (which Sheik Tantawi differentiates from suicide operations, because suicide is prohibited in Islam).

Driving Islamic militants is a fear that the Christian West, abetted by the Jews, is bent on destroying and subjugating Islam. Sheik Yusuf al-Qardawi, one of the world's most revered Islamic clerics, has written that "we are being confronted by the unrelenting hostility—and infiltration—of secularism, communism, Zionism, and Christianity" and that Islam is the victim of a "devilish alliance of Zionist, Christian, and atheist powers for a vicious and united campaign against Islam and Muslims." Sheik al-Qardawi, whose website contains a religious sermon condoning the killing of Jews, speaks regularly to groups in the United States. He exhorts Muslim youth to impose Islam by "fighting" or, alternatively, to give money to warriors waging jihad. At the annual meeting of the Muslim Arab Youth Association in 1995 in Ohio, he predicted that "we will conquer America ... not through the sword but through *dawa*."

*Dawa* describes the entire range of social, religious, and educational programs designed to proselytize and convert nonreligious Muslims and non-Muslims to acceptance of militant Islam. Some Islamic charities have become vehicles to spread *dawa*—and, as it happens, they raise a lot of money for militant Islamic movements. For example, in connection with a civil forfeiture action, a court ordered the seizure of nearly $1.5 million in assets of Mohammed Salah and the Quranic Literacy Institute in Chicago, based on an FBI affidavit alleging



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that the money was funding Hamas activities. In some cases, the charities' missions sound benign, but they and their supporters preach the language of hate. In that Ohio speech, for example, al-Qardawi repeated his customary prediction of the annihilation of Jews: "[T]his is what is told in the Hadith of Ibn-Omar and Abu-Hureira: 'You shall continue to fight the Jews, and they will fight you, until the Muslims will kill them. And the Jew will hide behind the stone and tree, and the stone and the tree will say, "Oh Servant of Allah, Oh Muslim, there is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him." The resurrection will not come before this happens.' This is a text from the good omens in which we believe."

Here, in the United States, one would expect Islamic groups to condemn or disavow the likes of al-Qardawi. But the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which presents itself as a civil rights group and a voice of moderation, has actually applauded al-Qardawi. It insists that holy war is not really a fundamental Islamic concept, that references to Islamic fundamentalism lead to "hate crimes," that reporting on Islamic extremism is inherently racist, and that an "anti-Muslim" bias is the only reason why the media have featured reports on Islamic terrorists. CAIR leaders have defended leaders of Hamas and other Islamic terrorist movements.

Hamza Yusef, listed on CAIR's letterhead as a member of its board of advisers, has said publicly that "the Jews would have us believe that God had this bias to this little small tribe in the middle of the Sinai desert and all the rest of humanity is just rubbish. I mean that is the basic doctrine of the Jewish religion. And that is why it is a most racist religion." CAIR cosponsored meetings on May 24 in Brooklyn, New York, and Paterson, New Jersey, where militant Islamic clerics urged jihad and made disparaging comments about Jews.

As first reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, CAIR reacted to the bombing of U.S. embassies in East Africa by issuing a media advisory warning that speculation about the Islamic identity of the culprits would lead to anti-Muslim hysteria. During a subsequent interview on National Public Radio, CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad likened jihad to a mission by the U.S. Army to "defend innocent people" or a mother "rais[ing] her children." Awad said he was "sad" about the bombings, but then said he was "pained and sad" about the U.S. retaliation—but did not condemn Bin Ladin.

This is sadly familiar. CAIR and other groups insist that they have condemned terrorism and the killing of innocent civilians, but, as in the most recent episode, they have refused to condemn by name the groups responsible for such attacks. (In the days following the World Trade Center bombing, even Sheik Abdul-Rahman publicly condemned as terrorism the very act it would later turn out he had helped to organize.) When pressed, groups like CAIR resort to rationalization, frequently claiming that the groups are fighting oppression. When CAIR's communications director, Ibrahim Hooper, was asked during an interview for America Online who he thought was "mainly responsible for the recent events" (the embassy bombings and the reprisals), Hooper responded: "Well, I can't speak to the specifics of the bombings and the counter-bombings, but I believe a great deal of what happened is responsible due to misunderstandings on both sides and that much can be solved by dialogue and education."

If the battle against Bin Ladin is to be won, then it will require a systematic effort to isolate and undermine the ideological underpinnings of militant Islamic theology. The Clinton administration should publicly insist that groups like CAIR condemn Bin Ladin, Hamas, and other radical Islamic movements that carry out violence. If these American groups genuinely opposed terrorism, they would condemn all Islamic fatwas and religious exhortations by Bin Ladin and other Islamic clerics calling for violent jihad against America, Jews, Christians, and moderate Muslims. The vast majority of Muslims worldwide do not support violence. They deserve leaders who will unequivocally condemn the extremist wing of militant Islamic theology.

STEVEN EMERSON is a writer in Washington, D.C., who is completing a book on radical Islamist networks.

**The price of neglecting Afghanistan.**

# THE SUCCESSION

*By Richard Mackenzie*

Ahmed Shah Massoud, the charismatic resistance fighter whom *The Wall Street Journal* once called "the Afghan who won the cold war," sat cross-legged on the floor of a rambling building in Jabul Siraj, a village at the foot of the Hindu Kush mountain range north of Kabul. A fierce wind blew across the Shomali plains, bending trees in its path, whipping up dust devils, and rattling windows—and adding an appropriate touch of drama to his warning: "We don't need armed Arabs wandering around our country," Massoud said. "They have no place here; they should leave."

Massoud was speaking about a small army of Arab fighting men who had ventured into Afghanistan to witness the jihad against the Soviets, and who had since become embroiled in Afghanistan's ongoing and torturous civil war. It was the late summer of 1993—still five years before the Arabs' leader, Osama Bin Ladin, would become an international household name as a terrorist. Massoud, the strongman behind the Afghan government of the day, was then holding 30 Arabs whom his forces had captured in attacks on his capital—prisoners whom he described as terrorists.



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I was there because Massoud was convinced that such terrorism was bad news not only for Afghanistan, but for the United States, as well. I was working on a documentary for CNN called "Terror Nation: U.S. Creation?" and Massoud was hoping to send a message through the broadcast. Yet, though Massoud and his allies would spend months trying to get the attention of American officials—and warn them about the terrorist headquarters being established in Afghanistan—the United States would never show interest. Indeed, the thesis of that CNN special, which aired in 1994, was that the bombing of the World Trade Center was an unintended consequence—what intelligence types call "blowback"—of the CIA's involvement in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. Among its other revelations were stories of camps in Afghanistan, where new armies of international terrorists were training. But, when it aired, U.S. officials would not even entertain the notion that such camps existed, let alone that they were another form of blowback.

Now, of course, we know that the camps do exist. We also know that the extremist movement known as the Taliban, which eventually drove Massoud out of Kabul to take power, is inexorably linked to Bin Ladin. And we

## *Silent struggle*

Last week's missile attack against Sudan also struck Americans like a bolt from the blue. Who knew where Sudan was on the map, let alone that it was a bitter enemy of the U.S.? Actually, the strikes were the culmination of a long struggle within the Clinton administration about how to deal with that nation's radical regime.

Part of the problem is that the National Islamic Front (NIF), which took over Sudan in a 1989 coup, is insecure about its hold on power. To bolster its position, the NIF has tried to expand Islam regionally, backing radical Islamist (and even fundamentalist Christian) groups against most of its neighbors. At the same time, the NIF has collaborated with Osama Bin Ladin to provide sanctuary as well as training to radical Islamist groups operating worldwide.

In 1993, the Clinton administration put Sudan on the list of nations that sponsor terrorism. Since then, though, officials have quarreled over how much more they should do. Career State Department officials, led by Undersecretary of State Thomas R. Pickering, have argued that dialogue and diplomacy are the best way to change the NIF. But political appointees, led by Assistant Secretary of State Susan E. Rice (formerly with the National Security Council), have countered that the NIF will only respond to force.

Even before the East Africa bombings, the administration was moving toward Rice's line. After Sudan had expelled Bin Ladin in May 1996, in response to Saudi and American pressure, Pickering argued that it was time to reopen the American Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan. (The embassy had been closed since February 1996 because of terrorism fears.) But NSC officials, including Rice, thought it should stay shut. In September 1997, while Rice was on maternity leave, Pickering tried what one diplomat calls a "squeeze play." Without White House authorization, Pickering told his subordinates to leak to the press that the administration would soon reopen the embassy. But a week later, after the news had been reported in both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, Rice's allies at the NSC got the announcement overruled. "Albright called Pickering and told him to call the reporters back," recounts another seventh-floor official.

So the U.S. mission to Sudan remained in Nairobi—Bin Ladin's eventual target. And it soon became the site of the largest CIA station in East Africa—a station that coordinates a sophisticated eavesdropping network aimed at Sudan with the cooperation of bordering countries like Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda, which form a coalition of frontline states against the NIF.

The United States's goal has not merely been to gather information. For at least two years the Clinton administration has been trying to undermine, if not overthrow, the NIF regime. "We want to compel change in how Sudan is governed," one White House adviser told me in May. Toward that end, the adviser added, last year, the administration promised the anti-NIF states $20 million in nonlethal aid. According to a high-level participant, the administration recently sent an interagency team to Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda to explore "humanitarian, development, political, diplomatic, military, and intelligence options."

The United States's interest in undermining the NIF is due to more than the regime's support of Bin Ladin. One of the NIF's closest foreign allies has been Iraq. According to a former Sudanese army captain who defected to rebel forces, up to 60 Iraqi military specialists rotate through Sudan every six months.

Why is this significant? The ex-captain said some of the Iraqis were involved in some kind of munitions development at the Military Industries Corporation in Khartoum. And Sudanese opposition leaders have long claimed Iraq was helping Sudan develop chemical weapons at installations in Khartoum. They further charge that Sudan has stored chemical weapons for Iraq at a military complex south of Khartoum.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials say soil samples collected outside the pharmaceutical factory targeted in the strike contained traces of a chemical that is an ingredient of VX nerve agent and lacks any known industrial application. Furthermore, *The New York Times* reported that Iraq bought medicines from the factory and that, according to U.S. officials, one of the leaders of Iraq's chemical weapons program had close ties to senior Sudanese officials there. Finally, non-American officials told the *Times* that Iraqi technicians frequently visited another, more heavily guarded factory in Khartoum also suspected of producing chemical weapons.

Of course, these are still allegations. Some of the Sudanese opposition's other claims—like the story that Iraqis who hijacked a plane to London in 1996 were involved in the chemical weapons program—are clearly preposterous; the hijackers were draft-dodgers. Nor is the evidence cited by U.S. officials necessarily irrefutable. For instance, a British engineer who, until 1996, worked as a manager at the factory targeted in the strike recently told the London *Observer* that the factory "just does not lend itself to the manufacture of chemical weapons."

Still, Iraq and Sudan are clearly up to something. Just consider the Sudanese foreign minister's first reaction to the U.S. strikes: he flew to Baghdad.

FRANK SMYTH

FRANK SMYTH, a freelance journalist, wrote about U.S. Africa policy in the summer *World Policy Journal*.



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know that U.S. policy blunders played no small part in creating this problem.

In December 1979, American officials responded to the surprise Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by pouring money into the Afghan resistance. Over the next eleven years, the United States would subsidize Afghan rebels to the tune of $3 billion. But, because the United States had been caught off guard, it quickly delegated important decision-making to Pakistan, despite the fact that it was not at all clear Pakistan's interests truly coincided with those of either Washington or the Afghan people.

And that would prove to be a key error. Although the natural leaders in Afghanistan were tribal heads and men like Massoud—who had developed a broad, grassroots infrastructure—Pakistan ignored or abandoned them. Chronically nervous about its front with India to the east, Pakistan has long been determined to keep a weak, nonthreatening regime in Kabul as a counterbalance to the West—and that was the criterion Pakistan used in choosing which rebels to back. In the end, the Pakistanis embraced Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an anti-Western firebrand, who gained notoriety in Afghanistan for killing more fellow mujahideen than Communists. Human rights groups and Western journalists tried to spread word of his atrocities. But he was obedient to Pakistan, and that was good enough to win him the lion's share of CIA supplies—as well as the endorsement of the United States, which adopted the Pakistani line that he was the most effective and representative mujahideen leader. "You don't understand," a senior U.S. official in Pakistan said at the time. "These Afghans are always killing each other. Hekmatyar gets the most weapons because he deserves it."

By 1992, with the Soviet Union no longer a threat, the United States had ceased supplying the Afghan rebels—and many American officials had simply ceased to be interested in Afghanistan altogether. But Afghanistan was hardly on its way to peace. The puppet regime the Soviets had left behind had withdrawn from its distant outposts and had pulled most of its forces back into larger cities. In April, the mujahideen entered Kabul—this was the time, say Afghans and observers, that Afghanistan needed a new kind of aid from Washington. "After pouring in three billion dollars' worth of weapons, America could have helped us find our way back to civilization and rebuild our nation," says a prominent Afghan leader who, in light of recent anti-Americanism in the area, asked not to be named. "For more than a decade, we knew only one thing, to settle arguments through the barrels of our guns."

But no aid from the United States came. And international groups could only watch in horror as Hekmatyar began blitzkrieg assaults on Kabul to try to drive out the forces of Massoud. From positions in the mountains surrounding Kabul, Hekmatyar rained daily barrages of rockets into the capital, striking indiscriminately at civil-


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ian areas where hundreds of rockets often hit before breakfast, leaving the mangled and the survivors to await the next onslaught. "We are witnessing one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters," a Red Cross official in Kabul said at the time. Again, representatives of Massoud and his party leader, President Burhanuddin Rabbani, made entreaties to Washington—and, again, there was no response. During the first few months of the mujahideen victory in 1992, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for Afghanistan, Peter Tomsen, and his deputy, Richard Hoagland, visited Kabul—but that would be the last of such visits for a half-decade. The two men, both well-attuned to the nation's problems, were promoted and transferred.

As Hekmatyar continued his assault on Kabul, Massoud's forces began to capture increasing numbers of Arabs who said they had come to Afghanistan for training and battlefield experience. Many of them turned out to be followers of Bin Ladin, the wealthy son of a Saudi industrialist who—at the time—was living in Sudan. Bin Ladin had cultivated a reputation as a courageous warrior, although his real contribution may have been simply to bankroll Afghan rebels and their families. He came with a checkbook—and a $300 million balance—thus allowing him to buy his way into the Afghans' favor. "We knew him as one of the Saudi benefactors who took care of widows and orphans," a retired U.S. official who helped fight the anti-Soviet jihad told *The New York Times*.

As Kabul remained mired in civil war in 1994, a new movement appeared on the scene: the Taliban, a motley group of former Islamic theological students. Initially, U.S. officials welcomed their arrival. After all, the Taliban had restored order in Kandahar and other corners of the South—perhaps, it was thought, they could do the same for the rest of the nation. In addition, U.S. officials reasoned, the Taliban could serve as a bulwark against Russian and Iranian interests, while providing Pakistan with an overland link to the lucrative flow of trade through Central Asia. U.S. narcotics officials had their own ideas: they believed, or at least hoped, that the Taliban might succeed in shutting down Afghanistan's blossoming opium trade.

What probably made the most difference to U.S. policymakers, though, was the Taliban's commitment to a particular commercial enterprise. The Taliban had promised to permit construction of giant gas and oil pipelines from Central Asia, down through Afghanistan, to Pakistan. The main contender for that work was an American-Saudi coalition of Unocal and Delta oil companies. The Taliban's "most important function ... was to provide security for roads and, potentially, oil and gas pipelines that would link the states of Central Asia to the international market through Pakistan rather than Iran," says Barnett Rubin, an analyst of Afghan affairs. Indeed, in the summer of 1996, when U.S. Senator Hank Brown of Colorado held meetings on Afghanistan, the most memorable testimony came not from an Afghan but from Martin Miller, the Unocal vice president in charge of the proposed Afghan pipeline project. From day one, Unocal said, the oil route through Afghanistan could pump a million barrels of oil per day. And, within a few years, once the pipeline reached other oil fields in Central Asia, it could pump five million barrels a day, the company vowed. (Many analysts believe that Central Asia is the next Middle East; one country alone, Turkmenistan, has 21,000 billion cubic meters of natural gas, the third-largest reserve in the world.)

It took a while for many in the West to catch on, but inside Afghanistan the key players were already well-aware of the pipeline's importance—and its potential effect on policy. In 1996, during a conversation in Kabul not long before the Taliban reached the capital, Ahmed Shah Massoud asked me about Unocal, its motives, its methods, and its ties to the U.S. government. When the Taliban finally reached the gates of Kabul, it was well-financed and well-equipped—and it could count upon the acquiescence of the United States.

Kabul fell to the Taliban quickly, and the new rulers brought with them mind-numbing rules for society: women could not venture outside their homes without a male relative—and, even then, not without tentlike clothing called *burkas* that covered them from head to foot. The Taliban also prohibited women from working, attending school, or being examined by male doctors. Religious police squads roamed the streets, beating offenders—such as errant women or men who trimmed their beards or did not pray at mosques when the Taliban said they should. Virtually every form of entertainment was banned, from television to kite-flying; glass windows on private homes were painted black.

But none of this raised the Clinton administration's ire, at least not initially. Hours after the Taliban took Kabul in September 1996, State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said the United States could see "nothing objectionable" about the version of Islamic law the Taliban had imposed in the areas it then controlled. In an address to the United Nations two months later, then-Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Robin Raphel conceded international "misgivings" about the Taliban but insisted the Taliban had to be "acknowledged" as an "indigenous" movement that had "demonstrated staying power." U.S. officials spoke of seeking early talks with the Taliban's leaders and discussed reopening the U.S. Embassy in Kabul once the dust had settled. This was entirely in character: in one encounter a few months before the Taliban entered Kabul, a mid-level bureaucrat at the State Department perched on his couch and tried to convince me that the Taliban was really not such a bad bunch. "You get to know them and you find they really have a great sense of humor," he said.

If the administration seemed nonchalant about the Taliban, Unocal was downright gleeful. In a statement to Reuters that the company has worked ever since to retract, a Unocal official applauded the Taliban's arrival and spoke glowingly about the immediate prospects for doing business with the group. Of course, this was



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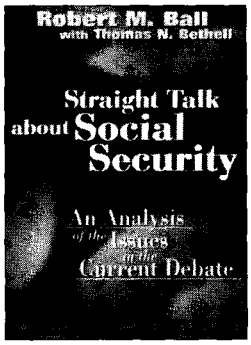


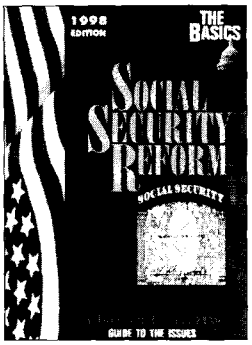


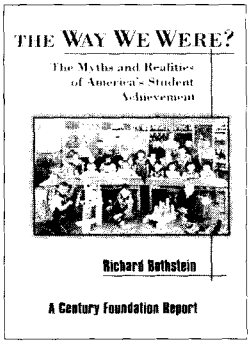
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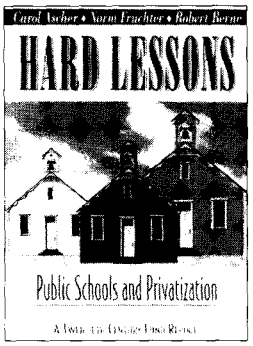


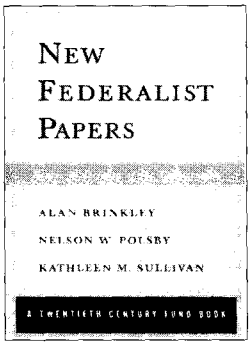


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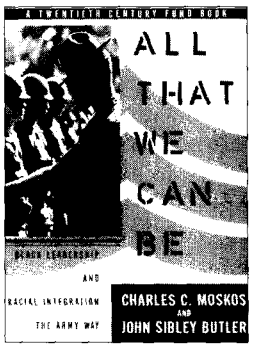

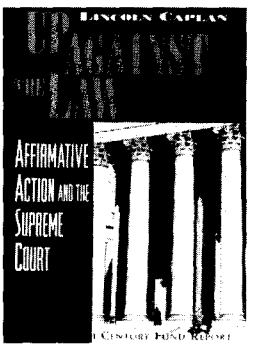


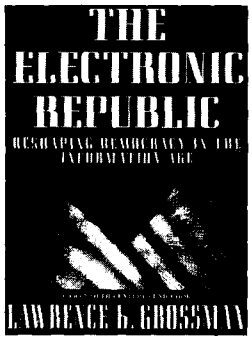


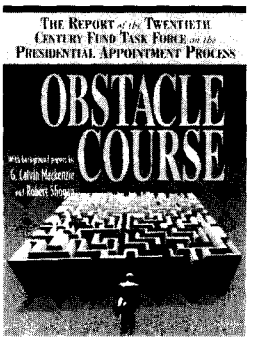


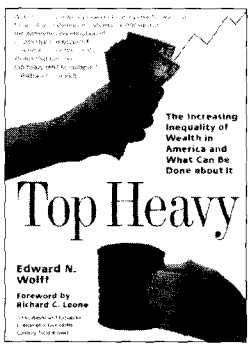
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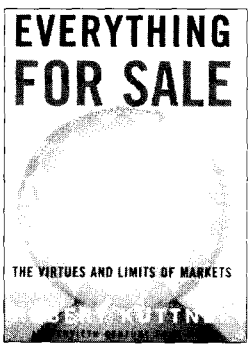


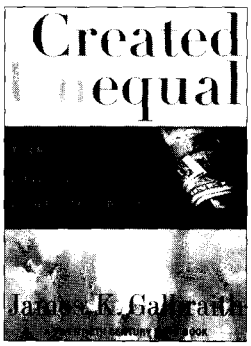


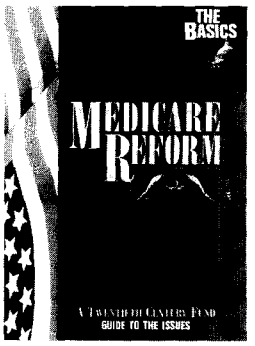


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hardly surprising, given Unocal's courtship of the Taliban. The company had played host to Taliban clerics on a trip to the United States. Unocal had also hired as "consultants" key Americans involved in Afghan operations during the jihad years. The former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, went on the Unocal payroll. A former official of the U.N. secretary-general's mission to Afghanistan, Charles Santos, was given a far more obscure position—he went to work for Unocal's Saudi partner, the firm Delta.

Eventually, both the United States and Unocal would come to regret their decisions. When Sudan expelled Bin Ladin in 1996 at the behest of Washington, he returned to Pakistan and then ventured into Afghanistan, where he settled in a no-man's-land outside Jalalabad, a city across the Khyber Pass from Peshawar. Upon his return, *The New York Times* recently reported, Bin Ladin personally gave the Taliban $3 million—a vast sum in such an impoverished nation—that helped cement a relationship. Bin Ladin saw he had a common cause with the emerging Taliban; Pakistani military intelligence officers who were helping to create the Taliban saw the wisdom of fostering relations between Bin Ladin and the Taliban's reclusive leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. The two were introduced, and, after the Taliban took Kabul, Bin Ladin moved to Kandahar—the city the Taliban now calls its headquarters.

The United States knew Bin Ladin had come to Afghanistan, and, when Bill Richardson, then the Clinton administration's U.N. ambassador, visited the Taliban leadership earlier this year, he asked them to expel Bin Ladin. The Taliban refused. (This, at least, is one official version. Other State Department officials have said that Richardson merely asked the Taliban to keep Bin Ladin "under control.") Finally—and quite belatedly—the administration turned. On a visit to a girls' school at an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan this year, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright angrily denounced the Taliban: "I think it is very clear why we are opposed to the Taliban. Because of their approach to human rights, their despicable treatment of women and children, and their general lack of respect for human dignity... [that is] more reminiscent of the past than of the future." Other U.S. hopes had gone unfulfilled, too: rather than destroy the opium trade, as U.S. officials had hoped, the Taliban taxed it, earning millions of dollars in the process.

Unocal, meanwhile, met with similar disappointment. Just this week, it announced that the pipeline project it had worked so hard to promote—the project on which so much U.S. policy had been premised—had become unfeasible. It was, for now, pulling the plug. Much had been sacrificed for that endeavor—money being the least of it.

RICHARD MACKENZIE is an award-winning independent television producer and writer. He has recently reported on Afghanistan and international terrorism for CNN, the Discovery Channel, *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, and *National Geographic*.

**Privacy isn't always the best medicine.**

# THE COMPUTER CURE

## *By Katherine Eban Finkelstein*

LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah, is one of the most highly computerized hospitals in the country—and, depending upon whom you believe, either a utopian or Orwellian example of what health care might look like another decade into the information age. For at LDS 5,000 interlinked microcomputers instantaneously capture medical data from 25 different clinical areas and feed it into electronic patient charts. An artificial-intelligence system then scans this "real time" data for potential medical missteps. The computers can override incorrect prescriptions and change intravenous drip rates; they automatically page nurses if they encounter anomalous lab results and determine when patients can be safely taken off ventilators. Electronically, they report public health threats to local officials. Physicians can log onto computers at every bedside and order tests or view x-rays and vital signs.

Although designed to protect patients, systems like these chill privacy advocates—an increasingly vocal group of activists and lobbyists who believe that the vast increase in electronic record-keeping threatens basic American liberties, playing into the hands of both depraved hackers and determined marketers. When an

KATHERINE EBAN FINKELSTEIN, a staff writer for the *New York Observer*, reports regularly on the politics of health care for national magazines.



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advisory board to the Department of Health and Human Services holds its second round of public hearings this year on whether to create a computerized national medical identifier for every citizen, privacy advocates will be ready. They will be lobbying hard to prevent the nation from building on a large scale what this Salt Lake City institution has done on a small scale.

Betty Redocto, however, has her own view about electronic record-keeping for health care: the system at LDS may have saved her life. In the mid-'80s, Redocto, a Utah housewife, started suffering from persistent weight loss, constant sleepiness, nose bleeds, and vomiting. When doctors at a local Air Force base clinic (her husband was in the service) diagnosed her with hepatitis B and told her there wasn't much they could do, Redocto tried a new doctor at a different clinic. And, when Air Force personnel refused to turn over her records, citing confidentiality rules, she spent a week making phone calls and then marched down to the clinic herself to demand the records. She got them—on loan, for seven days; they were stamped "Property of the United States Government" in big red letters. (By law, the government owns the records of care administered by military doctors and will release them to patients only at its discretion.) The new doctor looked through the file—which, like so many medical files, was full of barely legible notes and prescription orders—and finally decided that Redocto, now gravely ill with active hepatitis and advanced cirrhosis, needed a liver transplant.

She was sent to LDS. Twenty-four hours after Redocto's admission, the infectious disease team received its daily computer-generated report of every hospital patient who might be having an adverse drug reaction, based on computer surveillance of laboratory values. When Redocto's name appeared on the list, because of her elevated liver count, Stanley Pestotnik, the director of LDS's drug-surveillance program, went to her bedside and pulled up on a computer screen her medical history as newly created by the LDS staff. It turned out that, years earlier, a succession of Air Force doctors had casually treated her recurrent urinary tract infection with the antibiotic Macrodantin. "The doctors would write up Macrodantin with ten refills, and it would be just like a snowball," she recalls. "They started me on one pill a day, and, by the end, I was on four. The doctors just kept refilling it." Pestotnik instantly realized that, in rare cases, the drug Macrodantin can chemically induce hepatitis. So he alerted her attending physicians, who took her off the drug. She recovered. No transplant was needed.

Yes, one of Redocto's medical attendants should have caught the Macrodantin problem without automated assistance. But, as any health care professional can tell you, on the average hospital floor—a tunnel of noise and confusion with overworked staff groping for directives—it is difficult for doctors to locate, let alone consider, essential information about the patients in their care. A 1997 University


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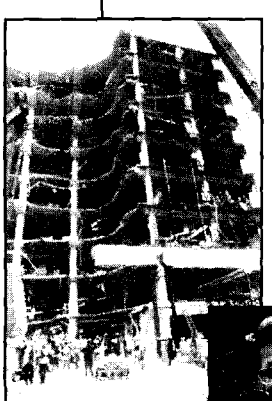

Terrorism and America

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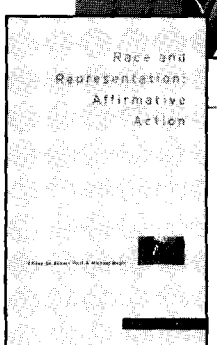


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of Chicago study found that medical errors may cause up to three million patient injuries a year and cost $200 billion, a fifth of America's total health budget. "The computer reduces all of the noise and complexity of health care to a minimum and provides a way of focusing attention on simple elements," Pestotnik says. "We tend to be very reductionist in medicine and focus on diseases. But the computer allows us to live in a reductionist and a holistic world."

Pestotnik has reason to be proud: in more than 100 peer-reviewed studies, LDS doctors have demonstrated that this sort of computer system saves money and lives. And, for the last few years, the government has been quietly considering ways to use technology to achieve the same results nationally. In July, the advisory committee to the Department of Health and Human Services began public hearings in Chicago on whether to create unique "identifiers" for patients—a kind of medical Social Security number—that would help link their records across separate databases. In a white paper released shortly before the hearings, the agency acknowledged that, without the identifier, it could not comply with a 1996 law and simplify medical billings for the millions of patients who switch among HMOs.

But the July hearings set off a predictable political firestorm. A wide range of privacy advocates, from the ACLU to Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, are deeply opposed to any sort of national medical database and view the identifier as the first step toward the creation of one. Without a guarantee of confidentiality, they argue, our medical system will collapse under the weight of patient distrust. Dr. Denise Nagel, a psychiatrist who cofounded the National Coalition for Patient Rights, predicts that, unless the flow of electronic information is suppressed, patients will lie to their doctors about lifestyles and genetic risk factors, delaying important clinical decisions and driving up health costs. She has argued before congressional committees that, even if doctors use electronic records only for patient care, a mob of direct marketers, consultants, investigators, and bureaucrats will clamor for the information. "Not everyone who has access to information has the patient's best interests at heart," she explains earnestly. She believes that, in a world where insurers "cherry pick" healthy subscribers, employers discriminate, and coworkers ridicule their colleagues, patients will have no choice but to dissemble.

To be sure, such fears are not without basis. And, before drawing too many lessons from LDS Hospital, consider that it is not exactly a typical hospital in a typical community. LDS serves a relatively homogenous, middle-class community that is 70 percent Mormon. Rates of sexually transmitted disease, substance abuse, and HIV infection in Salt Lake City are among the country's lowest. At LDS Hospital, staff members wear big name tags that read "Hi, my name is __" and give their first names in block letters. What's more, contemporary Mormons are inclined to regard electronic record-keeping as a spiritual pursuit and community obligation. (They've used computers to amass their vast library of genealogical records, which are stored in a nearby mountain vault and, if printed, would total 2.1 billion pages.)

There are certainly well-known horror stories about the misuse of computerized information. In 1995, for example, a convicted child rapist and low-level employee at Newton-Wellesley Hospital in Newton, Massachusetts, allegedly used the password of a recently departed employee to access the computerized medical records of almost 1,000 patients—mostly young girls. When he started phoning them, police say they traced one of his calls, and he was caught. (Even privacy advocates must admit that technology has its benefits, too.) In another highly publicized incident, the Harvard Community Health Plan (HCHP) entered psychiatrists' detailed notes from patient sessions into computerized records that were accessible to hundreds of HMO employees; after a 1995 *Boston Globe* article exposed the practice, HCHP segregated the psychiatric records and sent a letter of remorse to its subscribers.

But, while privacy advocates have used such examples to argue against computerizing records, they rarely acknowledge that too little information can have grave medical consequences. "Confidentiality and safety are competing interests," says Dr. David Bates, the medical director of clinical and quality analysis at the Partners Healthcare System in Boston. In 1995, he published a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that documented 6.5 adverse drug reactions for every 100 hospital patients. A more recent review of existing data, published in *JAMA* this April, found that such drug reactions kill 100,000 hospital patients a year and harm another 2.2 million (and these figures don't even include prescribing or dosage errors). Bates found that a computerized drug-ordering system that calculates dosages, screens for allergies, and overrides contraindicated prescriptions could prevent a third of these reactions. And he's seen the benefits of the system firsthand because Brigham and Women's Hospital, where Bates practices, is fully automated.

Alas, such "smart" medical systems are only as smart as the information they contain. And, given the continued opposition to compiling electronic records, crucial history is often buried in paper charts or not shared among providers. The results are mishaps like one that took place at St. Anthony Hospital North near Denver and resulted in the first criminal prosecution of nurses for a catastrophic medical error. On October 15, 1996, Alma Sanchez gave birth to a healthy son, Miguel. While Sanchez had previously been diagnosed with syphilis, her neonatologist never received outpatient records showing that the disease had been successfully contained. Confronting a language barrier and scant information, the neonatologist decided (unnecessarily, as it turned out) to treat the infant for congenital syphilis and mistakenly ordered penicillin G benzathine (instead of the recommended penicillin G) to be injected



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intramuscularly. A hospital pharmacist then misread the handwritten order for 150,000 units of the antibiotics and prepared a dose of 1.5 million units. When nurses confronted the problem of how to inject so much liquid into the newborn, they decided to change the route to intravenous injection, failing to see a printed warning on the syringe: "IM use only." Miguel died within hours of the injection.

When researchers from the Pennsylvania-based Institute for Safe Medication Practices reviewed the incident, they documented a cascade of errors that extended far beyond individual decisions. The mix-up at St. Anthony wasn't a fluke; it was, so to speak, a "normal" accident. When wards are crowded, doctors sifting complex and contradictory information need more technological support than a pen and a pocket calculator.

It is ten o'clock in the morning in Salt Lake City, and Dr. Reed Gardner, the chairman of medical informatics at LDS, is drinking a Pepsi in the hospital cafeteria. Though the Mormon Church, to which he belongs, frowns on caffeine, he permits himself this one indiscretion. He and his colleagues spent 35 years developing the hospital's system of 300,000 computerized records, and they are vigilant about protecting its integrity. Because any untoward disclosure might prejudice the staff against his magnificent machines, Gardner has built in major protections. Passwords and electronic "firewalls" prevent nonmedical staff from accessing records. Audit trails can be used to identify those who log on for the sake of curiosity as opposed to patient care. In the last decade, dozens have been "counseled" for such behavior, and a handful have been fired. The week before I arrived, a basketball player from the San Antonio Spurs was admitted with a concussion, and some curious staff members inappropriately perused his records. Even the denizens of Salt Lake City must be protected from temptation.

Gardner, for his part, approaches the computer as a vehicle for elevating human behavior. When we meet for the first time in his bunker-like office in the hospital basement, he pushes a form across the desk for me to sign. It enjoins employees from divulging any confidential information except when properly authorized. When I decline to sign on the grounds that I am not an employee and also plan to write about some of the patients, Gardner sighs. His oversize glasses seem to magnify his discomfort. He explains that the obstacles to wiring all the country's hospitals together aren't technological so much as political and philosophical. "The Achilles' heel of this whole business," he says, "is confidentiality."

That morning, I had asked to see the hospital's central computer database, which is locked in a remote wing of the hospital. When he called the computer technicians, his own employees, from an in-house telephone, they refused to give him the security code over the phone. To verify his identity, they insist on disclosing it only in person. Gardner was delighted. His security system was working.

Gardner, in his chinos and paisley tie, took me down the hallway, past scrubbed single-patient rooms and some pale displays of Utah iconography—historic floods, skiing, and ceramic hospital dishes from 1910, when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints still owned the hospital. (It's now owned by a nonprofit health care group.) Finally, a workman intercepted us in front of a plain white door and punched in the electronic code.

Inside a frigid space about the size of an average bedroom sat twelve Tandem Himalaya K-series computer processors. Fiber-optic cables were puddled in holes cut through the plywood flooring, and two windows looked onto the distant mountains north of Salt Lake. A few fire sprinklers dotted the ceiling. It was an unremarkable space, but Gardner talked about it with something like tenderness. He wanted me to know that the biggest market for these processors is automatic teller machines and that similar computer systems—which have a ready backup, or "fault tolerance," in the event of failure—are used to monitor air traffic and nuclear reactors. LDS computers maintain a telephone company standard—less than 60 seconds of downtime per day.

Later, I talk to David Classen, an infectious disease physician at LDS who helped design the hospital's antibiotic-management software. He tells me about a Japanese delegation that made three visits to study the system. "They were very coy about who they were," he recalls. "We just thought they were academics with their cameras and tape recorders." In fact, the delegation had been dispatched by the Japanese government to help develop medical software as an export industry. But a main reason that the LDS system works so well cannot easily be exported: it's simply that the doctors there trust it and each other. The system has a chilling capacity to expose poor results and decision-making and can statistically analyze medical outcomes. But, in order to gain full acceptance by the staff, the hospital has vowed not to use the information to review the credentials of particular physicians.

Classen showed me how the records could be used when he logged on to the system and pulled up a graph of the hospital's overall success in bypass surgery. On the left side of the screen, the results of individual doctors are anonymously displayed under their confidential five-character passwords. They can privately compare their results—including morbidity, cost, and length of stay—against the results of other unidentified colleagues or against the norm. "The only feedback doctors usually get is punitive, from insurance companies after the patient is gone," Classen says. "We make real-time information available to help doctors make medical decisions."

Guiding medical decisions means that the system has to collect and collate a steady flow of information. In the shock-trauma intensive care unit, for example, a device called a medical information bus (MIB) receives information from the array of equipment to which the patient is hooked—infusion pump, heart monitor, pulse



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oximeter, ventilator—and can electronically chart the changes that nurses formerly wrote down by hand. This data is then compared with thousands of clinical rules. (The system has a richer store of these rules—painstakingly formulated and entered by the LDS doctors—than any system like it in the world.) The MIB can then automatically record drip rates and ventilator settings and alert the staff to the data. And, as Betty Redocto learned, the computers can notify attendants of any dangerous response to medication. In an 18-month study, the LDS computer was able to identify 731 adverse drug reactions, whereas medical staff perusing paper records could identify only nine. "You don't even realize how bad it is," Gardner told me, "until you look."

As I stood amid the refrigerated Tandem processors, Jeff Moore, a computer technician, entered the locked room. Wearing a checked shirt and high-water pants, he greeted Gardner and handed him several pieces of paper rolled tightly to form a tube. It was the comprehensive audit trail of unauthorized viewers who logged on to the basketball player's medical records. Gardner's face reddened as he held the evidence of indiscretion. "We live in a community that is reasonably trusting," he said in a pained voice.

Clearly, the rest of us don't. In order to replicate a national or even a regional patient database, we need to accomplish through law what the Mormons have achieved through faith. In theory, computers should be able to offer greater security—greater privacy—than the locked file cabinets of a paper-based world: they can encrypt medical information and identify anyone who tries to gain access to it. Last year, a committee of the National Research Council, drawn from members of the American Academy of Sciences, made concrete proposals for ways to safeguard patient records in a medical database. As at LDS, each authorized user would be given a unique password, and log-ins would be subject to audits that flag unauthorized viewers. Computer screens of patient information would automatically blank out after any brief period of inactivity to prevent records from being left visible at unattended workstations. Data would largely be transmitted over dedicated modem lines, and any information sent over public networks, like the Internet, would be encrypted. Unauthorized access of patient records would be punished with stringent fines and sanctions.

Of course, the issue of who should have access to electronic records will not arise if privacy advocates succeed in preventing development of a database altogether. Their political strength became clear back in 1993, when the Clinton administration was assailed for proposing a national data bank as part of the Health Security Act. Both Germany and Canada maintain such databases as part of their health care systems. But, though the Clintonites pointed out that such a database could improve care, reduce costs, and spur research on clinical outcomes, groups like the ACLU promptly denounced the identifier. "We think it creates a de facto national file," its spokeswoman, Emily Whitfield, says. "If you're linked to one thing, you're linked to everything."

Medically, that's the point—to link information sequestered at far-flung institutions so that it can actually be used. "If we want to optimize the health of the nation, then, under strong privacy controls, doctors should be able to see all the clinical data so they are not walking around blindfolded," says Dr. Clement McDonald, the director of the Regenstrief Institute for Health Care at the Indiana University Medical Center, which is, like LDS and Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, a showcase for medical informatics. McDonald is currently heading an effort to link the emergency room patient records of six competing hospitals in Indianapolis, but he's proceeding with caution. He knows that other efforts at information-sharing have failed in more than a dozen cities, bogged down by privacy concerns or fights over who owns the data. The Indianapolis hospitals have agreed not to share data on substance abuse or sexually transmitted diseases, or to use the information for anything other than direct patient care. They have laboriously translated 3,000 terms used by each laboratory into a common code and so far have linked three emergency rooms. But, though their efforts have been limited, the results have been real. Recently, a young girl with symptoms of bronchitis came to the Methodist Hospital emergency room. She would have been treated with antibiotics and discharged, but emergency room doctors pulled up a test that had just been performed at the Indiana University Medical Center revealing that she had cystic fibrosis and hospitalized her immediately. She might otherwise have died of pneumonia.

Other efforts are moving forward, just as slowly. Last year, the National Institute of Standards and Technology gave Sequoia Software Corporation a $2 million grant to develop software that, even without unique identifiers, would enable a computer to link patient records. The technology will use pattern-recognition techniques to help identify and match an individual's medical records, which might be scattered across a dozen incompatible systems. Sequoia estimates that such linked records could save billions of dollars a year. Says Lucian Leape, a medical safety expert at the Harvard School of Public Health: "I literally think we could save a hundred thousand lives a year if we had computerized records."

In Salt Lake City, Reed Gardner is sure that what works for the Mormons can work for everybody—although it will surely require some privacy guarantees as well. Gardner, his wife, and I talked about this over dinner on the top floor of the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, owned by the Latter Day Saints Church, which sits across the square. In the basement, there was, fittingly, a computer center, where visitors could browse through the genealogical records of their ancestors. In the course of conversation, the vexing issue of medical confidentiality arose, and Gardner's wife, Jackie, brought up the recent infraction that her husband has been fretting about. "It's like what happened with that basketball player," she said—and, unthinkingly, she named him. Gardner reddened and lowered his fork. "You said it," he replied, mortified. "I didn't." •



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# BOOKS & The Arts

## *Stanley Kauffmann on Films*

### Transformations

I flipped for Siegfried Sassoon in 1939 when I read the first volume of his (slightly fictionalized) autobiography. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* it was called, an irresistible title for the life of someone who was not only an eminent English poet but who had been through all four years of World War I and had been wounded three times. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* and *Sherston's Progress* soon followed, taking him to the end of the war. As others have done, Sassoon gave himself another name—George Sherston was his choice—to gain objectivity.

The three volumes comprised an especially lucid account, in crystalline prose, of how the so-called Great War had shaken and changed Western civilization. Sassoon's chronicle was written from a particular social view. (His obituary notice in *The New York Times*, in 1967, mentioned that he had "died in his 52-room country home.") But his lofty status only added one more kind of pathos to the awful history of that war.

The third of his three volumes fixed on the most publicized episode in his life. In 1917, after two of his wounds, after winning the Military Cross, he published a manifesto asserting that "the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it," a protest "against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed." Because of his war record, the authorities maneuvered to avoid a court-martial; instead, they had Lieutenant Sassoon appear before a medical board where he was declared a victim of shell-shock and was sent to an officers' hospital for such cases—a great mansion outside Edinburgh.

This episode is the subject of a novel called *Regeneration* that the English author Pat Barker published in 1991. The book deals with Sassoon's stay in the hospital, his treatment by a distinguished army doctor, William Rivers, and his eventual return to active service. (He then got his third wound and finished the war as a captain.) Now Barker's novel reaches the screen—the film, too, is called **Regeneration** (Alliance)—distilled into an intelligent screenplay by Allan Scott.

Oddly enough, the most immediately striking aspect of the film is its lighting. Glen MacPherson, the cinematographer, has filled that Scottish mansion with lamplight—sunlight, too, but mostly lamplight—that laves the paneling on the walls, converting the place into a kind of exclusive club where members who have temporarily strayed can be set right again.

There's no question that the officer-patients have suffered, quite cruelly, and are in mental disarray; but there is also no question that this clubby hospital is, allowing for very few exceptions, an extension of the British class system. (The point is underscored: Dr. Rivers visits an Army hospital for enlisted men where veritable instruments of torture are used on shell-shock patients to hasten their return to normality and to service.) In this atmosphere, largely through conversations with Rivers, Sassoon is convinced to go back to war—in some measure because (his words) "I would rather be killed than survive as one who had 'wangled' his way through by saying that the War ought to stop."

Two other officer-poets are encountered in the course of his Scottish stay: Robert Graves, an old friend of his who visits (and who later published his own valuable memoirs, *Good-Bye to All That*), and Wilfred Owen, who is also a patient there. Owen approaches Sassoon as an admirer; when Sassoon learns that Owen writes, he helps him with some poems. (Owen was killed in France a week before the armistice. Sassoon edited his posthumous collected poems.)

Gillies Mackinnon directed *Regeneration* with sympathy and skill, handling the many conversations as intrinsically dramatic enterprises. And he treats with delicate sexiness an affair between one of the officers and a local girl. (Patients are not confined to the grounds.)

Sassoon is played by James Wilby, whose most notable previous part was Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust*, in which he was a touch more than adequate. Wilby is not markedly stronger here, but this role lies more comfortably within his compass. Stuart Bunce sketches an agreeable Owen, and Jonny Lee Miller is stony as a resentful patient. But the acting honors go to Jonathan Pryce as Dr. Rivers. Bushily moustached and shorn with a 1917 army haircut, Pryce gives us a man who is quietly competent, yet who takes each day's experience with his patients as a companionship he must learn from.

Mackinnon's opening shot is overhead, traveling over a battlefield after the fighting has stopped. Amidst the litter are a lot of bodies, some of them still wriggling. It's like moving across a

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

**First Love, Last Rites.** *A first feature that dares simply to exult in the atmosphere of a youthful affair. Heady evocations. (Reviewed 9/7/98)* **A Merry War.** *George Orwell's* Keep the Aspidistra Flying *deftly rendered, a comedy about an aborted 1930s revolt against philistinism with a scintillating cast. (9/7/98)* **Saving Private Ryan.** *Only a master—Steven Spielberg —could have made the opening D-Day sequence. Any first-line professional could have made the good war movie that follows. (8/17&24/98)* **Your Friends and Neighbors.** *A cool look at cool contemporary sexual mores, written and directed by the pitilessly talented Neil LaBute. (8/31/98)*—**SK**



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hideous mosaic. This shot—unplanned this way, of course—is a mute complement to the opening sequence of *Saving Private Ryan.*

Three highly experienced people have worked twelve years on a documentary called **Concert of Wills: Making the Getty Center** (Maysles), which is having its theatrical premiere at the Film Forum in New York. Susan Froemke, Bob Eisenhardt, and Albert Maysles were commissioned in 1985 to record the building of the Getty Center, and over years they shot 150 hours of archival film—intended chiefly as a history of the design, adjustments, construction, and finishing of the six-building center in Los Angeles. They began to see that there was a presentable film to be made from this footage, and two years ago they started work on it, shooting right up to the opening day.

The result is an extremely interesting, if (apparently) sanitized, account of a fragment of the troubles in planning and building this immense center. Central are the differing views of the architect, Richard Meier, and the museum director, John Walsh. The film's publicity mentions "heated debates," but there is only one that could be called hot, and it involves an artist, Robert Irwin. A British series, recently presented on PBS, about the governance of the Covent Garden opera house seemed closer to the stresses of large responsibilities and conflicting views of them. Arguments don't prove verity in this sort of documentary, but they don't disprove it, either.

Nothing is said here about the contents of the Getty Museum, nor about the looks of the Center as such. But this was not the point of the film: the construction is all. Outsiders may think they have some idea of the problems involved, but they don't. This film gives us something more than a clue about the enormity of the job. •

# *Jed Perl on Art*

## Levitation

Pierre Bonnard is a scintillatingly unpredictable artist. He muses on things; he is relaxed yet intent. He casts his eyes around a table, a room, a garden. He is looking for ripeness, for a visual poetry. He wants unearthly bursts and meltdowns of color, beautiful flashes that he can evoke by layering boiling reds, oranges, and purples, and adding strange icy blues and a dusting of snowy white.

His touch is insistent and also feathery and swift. Gide once wrote about Chopin that he "proposes, supposes, insinuates, seduces, persuades; he almost never asserts." I think that Gide (who reports in his journals about an evening with Bonnard and a visit to one of the artist's exhibitions) could have said the same about Bonnard. His subject is the poetry-of-the-not-so-everyday that he contemplates every day. And his grandest paintings—a basket of fruit, his Mediterranean garden, his wife Marthe in the bath—achieve a blissful yet disquieting levitational power.

More than any other painter who ever lived, Bonnard achieved a plangency—a certainty—that exists outside of any fixed idea of order. In his work, oddity and beauty are mixed up in deliciously inexplicable ways. He first defined this slyly seductive charm in a series of color lithographs of Parisian life published in 1899, when he was 32. Forty years later, charm had deepened into Olympian wit, in the hallucinogenic flare-ups that he made out of a flowering tree, out of his own face glimpsed in a mirror, out of sunlight glancing off the most ordinary white bathroom tiles.

Bonnard almost invariably painted a bohemianized middle-class world—culture *en déshabille.* His Paris is all youthful spectacle. His countryside is a coming-of-age contemporary pastoral. His bedrooms and his dining rooms are steeped in tangled grown-up feelings of tenderness, unease, ennui, and ecstasy. His last painting, *Almond Tree in Blossom,* a small canvas completed only days before his death in January 1947, is a miraculous image of youth and age in one: the tree, which is all cottony white flowers, also looks snow-covered, or like an old person's white-haired head.

In the retrospective of Bonnard's work that is at the Museum of Modern Art until October, the early decades of the career are not covered in any detail, so that the city disappears almost at once. Basically, MoMA is presenting Bonnard's explorations of the interior, which can include a close-up of a tabletop, a study of a figure, or a glimpse through a window.


**What's New in the World**

are **Bonnard** and **Mary Cassatt:** ***Painter of Modern Women.***

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**Griselda Pollock, the distinguished critic and scholar,** emphasizes Cassatt's study of old masters and her interest in Manet. Pollock argues that Cassatt's experimentation with etchings and pastels from the 1880s **enabled her to represent women and children without sentiment** but with a deepening psychological charge.

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This Bonnard retrospective is all variations on themes, and as certain motifs repeat, decade after decade, museumgoers may find themselves feeling more attentive, more absorbed in telling details and juxtapositions than they have ever been before. I found myself studying certain elements—a face, a bit of woodwork—so intently that after a while I was not any longer sure what I was seeing. That kind of ordinary-into-extraordinary alchemy is what Bonnard is all about. Writing at the beginning of the '20s, Clive Bell observed that "a picture by Bonnard escapes from its subject, and from its author, too." I don't know exactly what that means, but it is certainly as good a way as any of describing the somewhere-else quality that you feel in the later galleries of this show, where Bonnard gives an aureole to familiar subjects, infusing them with a glinting, otherworldly power.

Any painter who combines the personal and the metaphysical with such stupendous results is a figure about whom we want to know more. Surely John Elderfield, Chief Curator at Large at the Modern, who coordinated the show for New York, was attempting to satisfy that curiosity when he devoted the final room of the exhibit to Bonnard's self-portraits. (The show, which was curated by Sarah Whitfield, was at the Tate Gallery in London last winter.) Many of these heads are magnificent. Still, their aura of reserve and imperturbability, however provocative, does not lend itself to the confrontational theatricality that Elderfield seems to have had in mind.

Bonnard is an artist who reveals his secrets through his painterly discretion; his self-portraits have a mask-like opacity. There is a reason why Bonnard insists in so many of these images on our knowing that we are seeing him in a mirror: he prevents us from confronting him directly. But Elderfield won't give Bonnard room to breathe. In that last gallery, Bonnard is pushed at us in a way that the artist would not have appreciated.

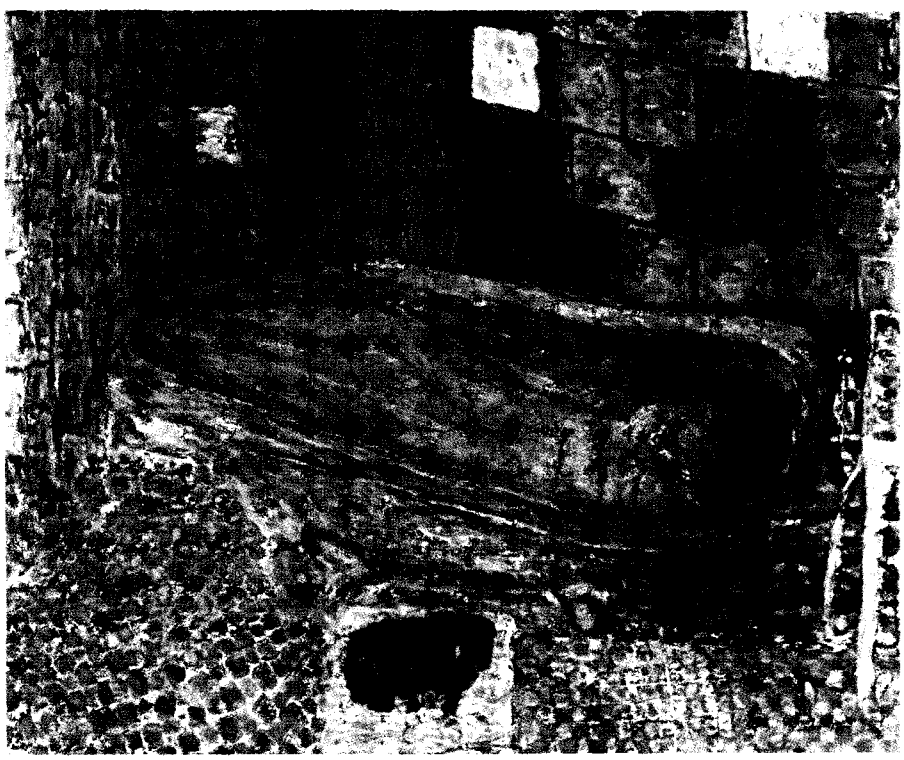
John Elderfield loves painting, but he certainly has some strange ways of expressing his admiration. In his catalog essay, which is an attempt to reconcile Bonnard's paintings with scientific and poststructuralist notions of perception, Bonnard has been deracinated and despiritualized. Perhaps Elderfield means to reassure us that Bonnard's paintings are grounded in something more than supreme intuition when he begins to explain that "the acuity of the viewing eye decreases in intensity from fovea to periphery," and then distinguishes between "the closely-packed 'cones'" and the "ever more sparely distributed 'rods.'" This technical information has its own interest, but as Elderfield presses deeper and deeper into the mechanics of vision, I am left wondering what ever happened to the Bonnard who lived in the world, and was inspired by writers, musicians, artists, and all the other men and women with whom he passed so many wonderful days in country gardens and nights in the salons and the cafés of Paris.

Readers who study Elderfield's "saccadic eye movements," "parafoveal ... vision," and "global rhythms" (which have, incidentally, a "pulsatile aspect") are going to be left with a disturbingly solipsistic view of Bonnard. Elderfield flattens experience into process. Then, in the show, he taxonomizes the process. He presents Bonnard as a painter, but not the story of how Bonnard became the painter that he was. Given that Elderfield is so interested in perception, for example, it is bizarre that he includes none of Bonnard's drawings, which were from quite early in his career basically the *only* works that he did directly from life.

Bonnard's radically informal black-and-white pencil drawings, in which the subtlest shifts of light, texture, and even color are recorded in a series of dots, jabs, curls, and zig-zags, are the perceptual preparations that lead straight into the daring paint-handling of the final years. The Modern has sponsored two previous Bonnard shows, in 1948 and in 1964, each of which contained dozens of drawings and prints. Elderfield includes not a one. I very much missed the early graphic work, for some of those pioneering lithographs, with their startlingly dissonant color orchestrations, prefigure the experimental harmonies in the paintings of the '30s and '40s.

But then the whole concept of this exhibition seems to minimize the extent to which an artist learns from what he has done before. Elderfield organizes much of the show thematically and nonchronologically, so that whole decades are jumbled together in rooms devoted to landscape, still life, interior. The effect is to pigeonhole the work of an artist whose very modernity rests on a belief that all genres are fluid, that a still life can turn into a portrait when a woman rests her elbow on a table.

Bonnard regards nature as the dictionary from which he draws the nouns, the verbs, and the adjectives of a new imaginative universe, and in doing so he fulfills a dream that Delacroix and Baudelaire first discussed in the 1840s. You might say that Bonnard's summing-up canvases of the '30s and '40s, with their firework-bouquets of never-before-joined-together colors, are one glorious trajectory in a hundred-year-long revolution in French artistic thought and feeling. Born in 1867, the year that Baudelaire died, Bonnard was scarcely in his twenties when he came under the influence of Gauguin, who had his own fascination with Baudelairean exoticism. Joining together with Maurice Denis, Edouard Vuillard, and other friends, Bonnard became known as a leader of



Courtesy Carnegie Museum of Art

PIERRE BONNARD, *NUDE IN THE BATH AND SMALL DOG*, 1941-46



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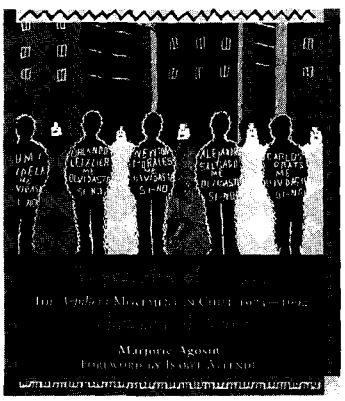

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a group, the Nabis, whose very name—from the Hebrew word for prophet—suggested the more-than-naturalistic and even spiritual ambitions that sparked these artists, their slice-of-life subjects notwithstanding. Art for art's sake was their religion. Bonnard never left the fold.

It was in the circle around *La Revue blanche*, the periodical to which Bonnard contributed graphics at the turn of the century, that the young artist came into contact with ideas that would affect him for the rest of his life. The search for something beyond the ordinary, in painting and in music as well as in literature, took divergent forms in *La Revue blanche*. The journal was sponsored by Thadée and Alexandre Natanson, who meant the "white" in their title to suggest a welcoming diversity of "isms"—a refusal to fly a particular color.

During Bonnard's involvement at *La Revue blanche*, Félix Fénéon, the magazine's "literary counselor" and a figure in the anarchist movement, was publishing Mallarmé's *Divagations*, music criticism by Debussy, early work by Gide and Apollinaire, and also political defenses of Dreyfus and Wilde. While Bonnard was to become, by the end of his life, a political conservative, his artistic sensibility was always touched by the anarchic instincts that he absorbed in his early years, when he did stage designs and book illustrations for Alfred Jarry's surreally comic *Père Ubu* saga.

Mallarmé, who was a grand old man to the generation of 1890, has been described by Edmund Wilson as believing that "every feeling or sensation we have, every moment of consciousness, is different from every other; and it is, in consequence, impossible to render our sensations as we actually experience them through the conventional and universal language of ordinary literature." Substitute art for literature, and there could not be a better description of Bonnard. In the salon of Misia Natanson—she was Thadée Natanson's wife and later married the painter José-Maria Sert—Bonnard found the keys to several worlds. He had already immersed himself in the asymmetrical and decentralized styles of Japanese art. Now he encountered Renoir and an antiscientific, hedonistic Impressionism. He saw the color of Impressionism become otherworldly in Redon's paintings and pastels. He learned about the manifold powers of theatrical artifice at the experimental Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, where plays by Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Jarry were produced; and, later, at the Ballets Russes, for which he did a poster. Like Ravel, Bonnard treated traditional forms hyperbolically. Like Colette, he adored animals, and his scratches and dabs of paint have a cat's paw's playfulness.

I believe that Bonnard was shaped by this extraordinary artistic universe; but for many people who look at his work today, the main point seems to be to find the ashes amid the diamonds, to prove that Bonnard was a deeply troubled man. We are told that Bonnard was interested not in beauty but in emotional undertones, as if a fascination with beauty were not psychologically complex. There is an almost tabloid-like discussion of his love affair with Renée Monchaty, a young woman who committed suicide in 1925, a month after Bonnard finally married Marthe, his companion since the 1890s. (The correct date of Monchaty's death became known after the Modern's catalog, which has the suicide taking place both in 1923 and in 1924, went to press.) Some people find it weird that Bonnard painted Marthe hundreds of times, but he didn't care to hire models, and so it makes perfect sense. As for all the time that Marthe spent in the bath, there are critics who will not be satisfied until the experts at several medical centers have brainstormed around the clock.

All of this is interesting; but only up to a point. People with eyes to see have always felt troubling undercurrents beneath Bonnard's casually luxurious surfaces. While Bonnard has never been unanimously adored (what great artist has?), he has been pretty well understood practically from the day he began exhibiting down to our own. And now there is a very impressive monograph on Bonnard by Timothy Hyman, an English painter who infuses his own impressions of modern life with an edge of haywire expressionist fantasy, and also frequently contributes criticism to the *TLS*, the *Burlington Magazine*, and other British periodicals. What Hyman brings to his new book, which appears in the Thames and Hudson World of Art series, is an exact understanding of the world in which Bonnard lived, and a gift for communicating an expansive visual experience to a sophisticated general audience.

Like Lawrence Gowing's classic study of Vermeer, Hyman's *Bonnard* is a book for rereading and passing along to friends. I mean it as a high compliment when I say that Hyman's Bonnard is an artist whom Clive Bell would have recognized. You cannot improve on Hyman's characterizations. He writes of Bonnard's desire "to monumentalize the glimpse, to make altarpieces out of the ephemeral." He describes compositions in which "the appearance of boneless informality overlays a steely armature."



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And of Bonnard's use of mirrors, he observes: "As a hinge between the self and the world the mirror makes both a rift, and a relationship."

Hyman allows the paintings to work their magic, and only then does he introduce the biographical facts that illuminate the magic. He gives a many-sided, sympathetic portrait of the withdrawn Marthe, whom Bonnard's friends did not care for, suspecting that she had an inordinate influence on the painter. Hyman has a novelist's sensitivity for human complexities and ugly truths. He reports, for example, that Bonnard, who was well aware of what Nazi rule meant for the Jews who had been such a part of his bohemian youth, nevertheless complained to Matisse in 1942 that "the British will never be punished." Bonnard was invited to do a portrait of Marshal Pétain, and, according to Hyman, "probably would have done so had an administrative hitch not intervened." Hyman does not disguise his deep dismay about all of this, but he also refuses to fall into the trap of imagining that a man's politics necessarily color his art, which can be guided by a different compass. I can't think of another recent book about a painter that has struck me as so heartfelt, so lucid, so wise.

In Bonnard's paintings, few things are what they first appear to be. Marthe, with whom Bonnard lived for nearly half a century, is the archetypal elusive presence. We see her bent over a cup of coffee at the far end of a table, or turning away from us to look in a mirror, or almost totally submerged in her bath. She is Bonnard's there-but-not-there muse. With her cloche hats, her short hair, her small breasts and straight, slim legs, she has the enigmatic fascination of a flapper grown old. She apparently regards her body with some of the ease of a turn-of-the-century bohemian girl, but she is also profoundly alienated from that carefree mood. All of this makes more sense if we remember that Marthe was already in her fifties in the '20s, and that many of the greatest paintings were done when she was well into her sixties. Bonnard understands Marthe's alienation; he makes us feel that there is a grandeur to her diffidence.

Marthe seems to live in slow motion, and Bonnard admires that. Her quietness leads him to focus on the tiniest shadings of experience, to which he gives a fierce symbolist impact. His canvases record an ever-deepening fascination with Marthe. In the early years, she is the kind of figure whom we know from the pastels of Degas or the novels of Zola—a woman of her time, going through the day. But by the later galleries of the show, when we are seeing paintings from the '30s, she seems to have shed all the everyday concerns, so that each pose becomes iconic, archaic, now-and-forever. Standing before a mirror in 1931, bending over in the bathroom in 1932, and reclining in the tub in the cycle of paintings that Bonnard finished only in 1946, four years after her death, she is a domestic goddess. He is painting the mythic moments of her life.

There are few artists with anything like Bonnard's genius for turning the utterly familiar into something magnificently strange, but even he rarely takes his realist-into-symbolist adventure into territory as risky as these late accounts of Marthe in the bath. Especially in the final, dazzlingly colored canvas, which is joined by three earlier ones in a single room at the Modern, Bonnard's figure painting reaches a new height of beautiful understatement. The bath, a common way of soaking away the day's troubles, yields an image that suggests both a watery grave and a secular transfiguration.

Something in the directness of Bonnard's drawing allows us to see the woman in the tub not so much as a figure with weight and mass but as a shimmering imagination that wafts up and dematerializes into the glittering, Byzantine-mosaic-rich array of the surrounding


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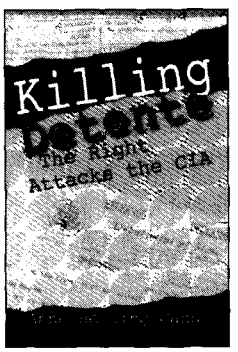


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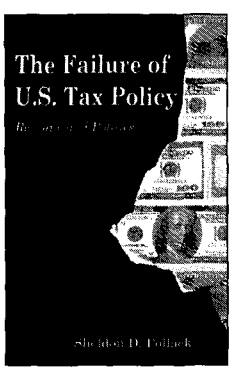


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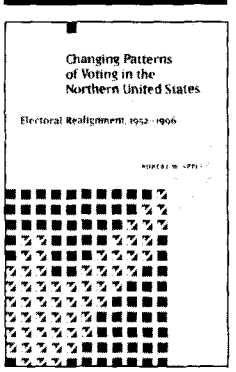


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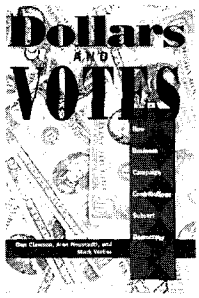


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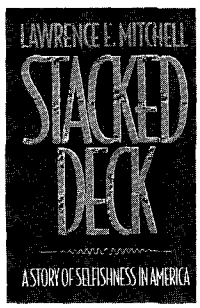


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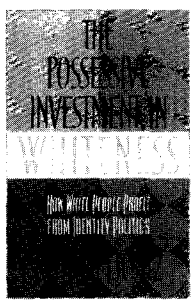


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room. Marthe is of this world and out of this world, too. And Bonnard's ultra-personal paint handling—his dabs and smears and scumblings of pigment—tell us that he is right there with her, alive to every dip and turn of her mind.

Bonnard's last bathroom composition has a preternatural calm. Even the dog sitting in front of the tub is lulled by Marthe's stillness. The painting is an extravagant hymn to quietness, to watchfulness. While Bonnard does not include himself in the painting, we are made so conscious of his attentiveness that Marthe's very solitude becomes a defining image of the artist and the model, Pierre and Marthe, together for half a century. We don't know what she was thinking, or what they were saying to each other. But we know that they were together when everything that mattered, all the emotions and the apprehensions and the equivocations, were hovering in the thick, bright, beautiful air. •

# *Mindy Aloff on Dance*

## Fancy Free

Of all the ways in which a ballet can be said to live, perhaps the most profound is that, on a hearing of the music alone, the stage events ineluctably flood back. When Jerome Robbins died on July 29, reportedly at the age of 79 (like a number of facts about his career, even this one can be questioned), I tried to think which of the 30 or so of his ballets that I have seen (of the some 60 works that he made for the ballet stage) prompted such remembrances. By "stage events" I mean more than costumes, décor, and general situation: I mean specific steps and gestures keyed to specific musical passages. For me, there are three works, all from early in his career: *Fancy Free* (1944), to a score by Leonard Bernstein; *The Cage* (1951), to Igor Stravinsky's Concerto in D for string orchestra; and *Afternoon of a Faun* (1953), to Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'une Faune.* Many moments from many other of his works are in my mental storage as well, but they exist quite independently of their musical support, and the music itself doesn't invoke them. These three are autonomous, organic worlds.

Of them, I think that *Afternoon of a Faun*—a pas de deux for a boy and a girl in a rehearsal studio—is also a great dramatic ballet, and the best that Robbins ever made. The plot is minimal. The girl enters the studio where the boy has been warming up. They practice ballet partnering before a mirror that we are asked to imagine. (It occupies the "fourth wall" of the stage.) The boy spontaneously kisses the girl on the cheek. She leaves the room. Yet absolutely every detail of performance matters: the way the girl holds her head on her entrance, the way the boy touches her, the way she covers her cheek with her hand after the kiss, the rate at which he settles back on the floor when alone. The ballet is selflessly warm; it almost arrives at the psychic place where Balanchine's ballets begin. That is, it is not "about" anything other than the action it presents. It is not the residue of some larger story which has been boiled down to ten minutes, but the story itself. This also seems to me one kind of extreme in Robbins's work: the capacity for projecting, in theatrical contexts, real, intimate, romantic love. Of this, *Afternoon of a Faun* is a unique example.

*The Cage,* in contrast, represents another extreme: Robbins's capacity for presenting theatrically, with analytic detachment, real public scorn. In the case of *The Cage,* the subject is hatred: two ballerinas, two danseurs, and a female corps de ballet impersonate a mating ritual among a species or culture in which the females kill and eat the males. (Today *The Cage* tends to be characterized as a ballet about the insect kingdom specifically, but its early program note read: "There occurs in certain forms of insect and animal life, and even in our own mythology, the phenomenon of the female of the species considering the male as prey. The ballet concerns such a race or cult.") It is a cold-blooded fantasy presented coldbloodedly, without any context of transformation, as, for example, Martha Graham provided for her avenging Medea and Clytemnestra. Even without spiritual light, however, *The Cage* manages brilliantly to convey the illusion of a hot process. Its visual and dramatic symmetries—two queens, two lovers, two deaths—its switchblade gestures and stabbing marches on pointe are so clearly wedded to the music's perfectly calm



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relation of hysteria that one can still sense in it the excitement of choreographic invention burning away everything that brought the ballet about, except for what Edwin Denby once called its "horrifying succinctness."

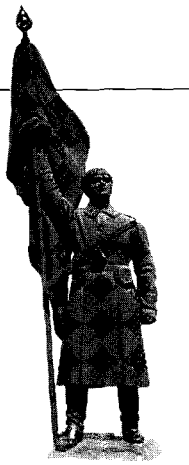
Where did *The Cage* come from? Robbins famously pronounced that "if you observe closely you must realize that it is actually not more than the second act of *Giselle* in a contemporary visualization"—although, since no man lives, it would have to be *Giselle* from the point of view of the peasant Hilarion, and without the transfiguring love for Albrecht that leads Giselle, herself, to rebel against the Wilis and save him—without the element that makes *Giselle* what it is. Lincoln Kirstein thought that Robbins was looking closer to home, to the repertory of the New York City Ballet, for which *The Cage* was fashioned and which has never contained a production of *Giselle*. In *The New York City Ballet*, his memoir of the company which appeared in 1973, he wrote that "it is impossible to imagine *The Cage* without a double image of the bacchantes' final fury in *Orpheus*," although, he added, "the metrical division which Robbins gave his hive of horrid creatures is due as much to Stravinsky's syncopation as to Balanchine's structure." (Alas, Kirstein's observation must be taken on faith: the original choreography for the bacchantes in Balanchine's *Orpheus* is no longer performed.)

Denby had yet another suggestion in a review in 1952:

> The dramatic pressure of *The Cage* is extraordinary. It devours the notes, it die-casts the gesture; when the curtain comes down, as [Virgil] Thomson said to me, there isn't a scrap left over. I was fascinated by the gesture—so literally that of the important Broadway people at parties and in offices. Bothered to be caged in with them, I looked around unhappily. No exit.

Then he added an offhand remark that has curiously stood the test of time as a more general truth about Robbins's oeuvre for the ballet stage: "But the murderous power that led to the climax and beyond—I couldn't really sense it in the force, the propulsive force of the gesture; I felt it outside the characters."

Some version of the word "outside" inflects the conversations of many dancegoers who know Robbins's work well. There are the stories his ballets apparently enact, and the stories one feels they are really enacting. Frequently, that second level of story turns out to be an account of his admiration for other people's ballets, notably Balanchine's, to which Robbins liberally referred with

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reverence over much of his career. Robbins could also, on occasion, summon up the Russo-American repertory in which he performed as a valuable character dancer during his early years with Ballet Theatre in the first half of the 1940s. If you want to see him truly evoke *Giselle*, one of Ballet Theatre's staples in those years, you might look at the section of his comic masterpiece, *The Concert, or, The Perils of Everybody* ("A Charade in one act" from 1956), in which the triangle among Giselle, Albrecht, and Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, is reproduced in the triangle of a concertgoer, a dreamy young woman in the audience who excites him, and her jealous spouse. This lunatic Punch-and-Judy sequence remains funny on its own; but the fun originates in the exacting way it reproduces and simultaneously mocks the conventions and stereotypes of a ballet that, itself, mocks nothing.

It may be that the outsider, or the role of audience member, is one key to Robbins's most memorable invention. It is certainly the basis of *The Concert*, which depicts the antics of an audience at a piano recital; of *Moves* (1959), a work without a score, in which the cast twice lines up at the edge of the stage as if to walk out into the audience or confront us in some way, then each time melts into a dance movement; of the unforgettable late moment in *Dances at a Gathering* (1969) when, after nearly an hour of solos, pas de deux, and little group encounters to Chopin, the dancers come together, pause as an ensemble, and gaze upward at some ineffable thing passing overhead, momentarily yet steadily, like a cloud or a plane. Outsiders who watch presume insiders who are watched: one of the wittiest elements of *Afternoon of a Faun* is that the couple inspecting their images in the "mirror" are literally training their sights on the audience. When Robbins uses the proscenium stage opening this way—as a mirror for reality and reflection (and he does it in several of his ballets from the 1950s)—the theatrical effect is immediate and spellbinding, as if he had found some rent in time and space that would heal a basic separation among human beings. After one viewing, however, it remains an effect, a tool borrowed, I think, from certain works by Anna Sokolow—another choreographer for whom Robbins displayed affection.

Still, when he creates the figure of the outsider as audience member *within* a ballet, the result is always charming and magnetic, the way a backstage musical can be. (Robbins choreographed and directed *Gypsy*, the ultimate backstage musical.) I think of *Ma Mère L'Oye (Fairy Tales for Dancers)*, from the New York City Ballet's Ravel Festival, where the dancers start off lounging in practice clothes, listening to tales of Mother Goose, then, in a homespun manner, put on a little show to reenact some of them. The path to performance, the ballet seems to say, is through the role of an audience. The best section in the labored whole of *Ives Songs* (1988) is the bench dance for three "little girls" in adult bodies, squirming as they wait for a small-town concert or theatrical to begin. The movement is deliberately awkward, yet the behavior carries the authenticity derived from decades of watching dancers and audiences and children. When Robbins turned his dancers into kids, he made those kids real. In a recent interview, the ballerina Allegra Kent—who performed in Robbins's works and originated the part of the girl in yellow in *Dances at a Gathering*—especially commended the way Robbins treated actual children in his work, whom he never failed to use with playfulness (as in his choreography for the smallest mice in Balanchine's version of *The Nutcracker*, on whose nightmare scene Robbins collaborated) and dignity (as in *Circus Polka*, where he sent 48 girls from the School of American Ballet cantering through amusing and delicate configurations as a ringmaster—originally impersonated by the choreographer—cracks a whip). Kent also singled out a moment in the Broadway musical *The King and I* (1951), which Robbins choreographed, where the king's children are brought forward to meet Anna. "It was all in their stance," she said. "The special effects were very simple and very deep."

No figures of the audience in Robbins's ballets are more beloved by the audience who observes them than the two young women in *Fancy Free*. It is they, sitting at a table in a bar, for whom the three sailors perform their self-revealing variations, like dancers auditioning for a couple of producers. Without them—that is, were the sailors only dancing for themselves and the bartender—the scene would have no dramatic interest; and although the women don't dance during this section, their slightest reactions powerfully affect the feeling of the whole. These girls of *Fancy Free* not only suggest the acting strengths of Muriel Bentley and Janet Reed, their originals at Ballet Theatre; they also indicate in the most concentrated way the gifts as a choreographer-director that Robbins would go on to exhibit spectacularly in Broadway musicals.

*Fancy Free*, with a score commissioned from the wunderkind Bernstein, launched Robbins's creative career with a bang. An instant hit with Ballet Theatre audiences, it remains in active repertory more than a half-century later. Right off the bat, it crystallized Robbins's omnicompetence, ambition, and obsession with gestural detail. It also displayed the strengths that he possessed as a dancer: observers who saw his original rhumba-like solo as the third sailor say it has never been bettered. (Robbins's charisma as a performer would lead Balanchine to, among other things, revive his *Prodigal Son* in 1950 with Robbins in the title role.) Kent, who met Robbins when she was eleven, in the class of Carmelita Maracci, speaks of his performing abilities with unabashed admiration—both on stage and in the rehearsals of his own ballets, where he would demonstrate exactly how he wanted a part performed. "He was magnetic to watch," she said. "He had a way of moving that wasn't based on anything technical, particularly—more of a quality. Everyone in rehearsal just couldn't wait to watch him dance."

*Fancy Free* opened a treasure door not only for Robbins, but for the American musical stage. The score led to subsequent Robbins and Bernstein collaborations for the ballet, such as *Facsimile* (1946) for Ballet Theatre. (Steeped in


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the collaborators' experience with Freudian analysis, *Facsimile* failed as a dance, although the score still stands up.) Within less than a year of *Fancy Free*'s premiere, Robbins and Bernstein joined with Betty Comden, Adolph Green, and George Abbott to produce a Broadway musical, *On the Town*, based on *Fancy Free*'s scenario. In our age, when ballets and musicals are routinely recycled from the movies, the origins of *On the Town* seem the stuff of which a dance fan's dreams are made.

From this show, another hit, the collaborators went on in various permutations to enrich the Broadway musical over the next decade, with such shows as *Look Ma, I'm Dancin'* (1948), *Call Me Madam* (1950), *Wonderful Town* (1953), *Bells Are Ringing* (1956), and *West Side Story* (1957). Indeed, the full story of Robbins's monumental contribution to Broadway has yet to be authoritatively chronicled. The Library of the Performing Arts—whose Jerome Robbins Archive of the Recorded Moving Image was established in 1965 with a small portion of Robbins's royalties as the choreographer of *Fiddler on the Roof* (a show he also choreographed and directed)—lists him as a contributor, sometimes the chief choreographic contributor, to shows that are frequently credited to others. Robbins consulted as a show doctor on many more projects than are usually associated with him: *The Pajama Game* (1954), for instance, whose choreographer of record was the young Bob Fosse, a virtual Broadway unknown. In his biography of Fosse, *All His Jazz*, Martin Gottfried recounts how Robbins contradicted the director, George Abbott, who wanted to dispense with the Fosse number "Steam Heat" because it stopped the show. Abbott's trademark was a musical with an invincible continuity, where all numbers contributed to the ultimate effect of the whole; furthermore, the dancers of Fosse's music-hall turn were, at that time, also unknown (Carol Haney, Buzz Miller, and Peter Gennaro). Robbins argued that the number was too good to excise, and it is thanks to him that "Steam Heat" survived to become one of the most well-known and well-loved numbers that Fosse ever made.

This anecdote about Robbins and Fosse is not the only example I have found of Robbins's backstage generosity on behalf of a colleague. And his establishment of the archive at the library was an act of generosity benefiting thousands of individuals he would never know. As a number of individuals who did know him cautioned me, there was a kind side to Robbins. During the first two-thirds of his career, however, there was also a dark, tyrannical side, especially visible, it seems, in his treatment of dancers and subordinates. In sum, the dividing line for how he treated his colleagues in the theater and the ballet was whether or not he could fire them. If he couldn't, he could still prove a colossal pain in the neck in his effort to control the tiniest details of a production out of the self-assurance that he knew what would work for an audience, but he extended professional courtesy. If he was their boss, however, he could wound them terribly, and because he was an astute student of psychoanalysis, he could humiliate them to the core, frequently in public rehearsals. Although the harshest stories about Robbins are not published, some very harsh ones are: in the interviews that Barbara Newman conducted for her book *Striking a Balance*, for instance, or in Dorothy Bird's memoir, *Bird's Eye View: Dancing with Martha Graham and on Broadway*.

The ballerina and choreographer Ruthanna Boris, who knew Robbins from his years as an aspiring choreographer for Max Liebman at Camp Tamiment in the Poconos during the late 1930s and during the early 1950s at the New York City Ballet, believes, as she said in a recent interview, that he suffered from some undisclosed emotional torment which his work for the stage exacerbated, and which he licensed himself to unleash on others in a studio setting. The issue is not Robbins's genius as an artist. Frequently he did know what would provoke a particular audience response, and on Broadway, especially, his knowledge was not only admirable, it was also bankable. The question is whether the sum of his art was worth the human cost it exacted; it is a question one asks as well of the careers of Antony Tudor and Martha Graham, for similar reasons.

Although Robbins left no published autobiography, no picture of himself from the inside, he did go on record in 1981 in an interview with what Doris Hering calls, in her entry on him for the International Encyclopedia of Dance, a "credo":

> One thing I have absolutely no patience with in the theater is anyone who works in it without being a completely dedicated artist and professional in all senses of the word, bringing to the theater not only the talent, but also coming equipped with technique and craft. I feel that if someone doesn't have an insane love for the theater, he shouldn't be in it.

Laudable as this passion sounds, it must also be set beside the fact that, unlike choreographers as diverse as Graham, Tudor, Fosse, and, extensively, Balanchine, Robbins's works did not, on their own, develop the career of a single significant dancer. Even individuals who performed his ballets particularly well—in recent years at New York City Ballet, Kyra Nichols, Robert La Fosse, Jean-Pierre Frohlich—were either formed elsewhere before he found them or developed as artists in other repertories. This is a particularly sad fact since Robbins possessed one of the keenest eyes for dance talent, particularly among youngsters, in the history of ballet. Yet he seemed unable to envision what they might do to grow as dancers; his expertise was to use, sometimes with consummate assurance, qualities they already possessed. This end-stopped insight may be linked to his apparent lack of interest in teaching or in company management. His own short-lived company, Ballets: USA, did not lead him to widen his skills as a leader outside the rehearsal studio and the stage. His legacy of hope to his field was the other choreographers whose work he fostered or inspired: Fosse, Michael Bennett, Eliot Feld, and—it may be suggested—the valedictorian of the class, Twyla Tharp.

Jerome Robbins was a tangled person, with many mysteries. (Not the least of them is how, once he had given the names of colleagues to the House Un-American Activities Committee, he managed to survive, indeed thrive, in the theatrical milieu of New York, where his appearance before HUAC was bitterly resented.) Even so, none of his complications would be of the slightest interest as more than a footnote to history were it not for the work that he sacrificed so much good will to bring into being. Without his art, he is just Jerome Rabinowitz, one more New Yorker who came of age during World War II and cruised into its Golden Age with driving ambition, ironic defenses, and, somewhere far inside, a heart. But he was almost never without his art. During her summer at Camp Tamiment, Boris explained, Liebman encouraged a number of young theater artists, many of them unknowns, to contribute their skills to shows and cabarets, and he provided a bus from Manhattan to convey them there. Boris took a seat on the bus behind two guys with heads of thick dark hair. After a while, one of the heads turned around and introduced himself.

"Hi," he said teasingly. "I'm Eddie Gilbert, and I'm the scenic designer." "Hi," Boris answered, in kind. "I'm Ruthanna Boris, and I'm the choreographer." Slowly, the other head turned around and said, in pointedly measured tones without a touch of humor in them: "My name is Jerome Robbins, and *I am the choreographer.*" •



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**Adoption, or the triumph of love over biology.**

# *The Chosen Family*

**BY JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN**

Nobody has good figures on the total number of adoptees in the American population. By most estimates, 4 percent of Americans are adopted. In 1986, there were 104,088 adoptions; half were of biologically related children, half were stranger adoptions. It is not a huge number, in and of itself. But, as *The New York Times* reported in November 1997, "six in 10 Americans have had experience with adoption, meaning that they themselves, a family member or close friend was adopted, had adopted a child or placed a child for adoption." And many more Americans consider adopting a child at one point or another and spend a lot of time talking it over with family and friends.

Thus the concern about adoption in America is considerable, even if the aggregate figure is not. Why is this so? In part, surely, because adoption raises some deeply fraught social and philosophical questions. It broaches the old conundrum about nature and nurture, as well as all sorts of vexing new variations on what we like to call "identity" and "difference." Is identity inherited, or can it be acquired? Can difference be trumped by love? It is impossible to think seriously about adoption without thinking seriously about the relationship of morality to biology.

The historian E. Wayne Carp alternately laments and reinforces the "privileged position" that biological kinship occupies in American culture. Even as biological kinship has always occupied the central place in child-rearing (one would be hard pressed to find a culture anywhere in which it does not), Americans over the years, and for a variety of motives, have reached out by the tens of thousands to take in children who are not related to them by blood. If there is, as Carp writes, a "pervasive cultural bias against adoption in America," it is still the case that hundreds of thousands of American children were reared on the hymn, "Jesus loves the little children/All the children of the world/Be they yellow black or white/They are precious in his sight/Jesus loves the little children of the world." We live in a society that provides reasons for many adults to offer homes to small strangers in need.

To be sure, adoption is not only an affair of generosity. It is also an affair of risk. It is no wonder that it has inspired ambivalence in so many quarters. Consider P.D. James's deeply troubling novel *Innocent Blood*, which appeared in 1988. Its protagonist, Philippa Rose Palfrey, a woman of our era, sets out in search of her "true identity." She winds up with a dead biological mother (she commits suicide), and a defeated return to her discombobulated, ditzier-than-ever adoptive mother and her sophisticated, somewhat cynical adoptive father, with whom she commits a casual act of incest while on a holiday in Ravenna aimed at healing the trauma of her terrible discoveries about her past. The bedding in Ravenna is treated as a kind of curiosity. Philippa and her adoptive father "get it out of the way so that they could again take up their roles of father and daughter." Everything works out, more or less, though for most of us this is a cascading series of debacles culminating in a major sin (or the violation of a universal taboo, if you prefer).

Philippa's search to "find out who I am" is permitted to her by "section twenty-six of the Children Act of 1975."

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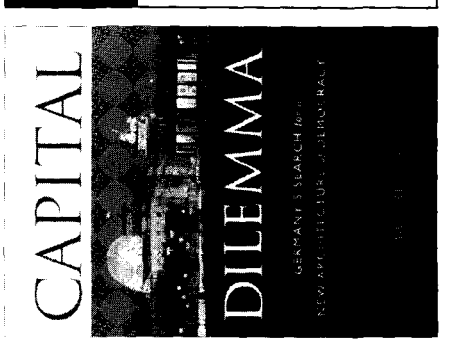





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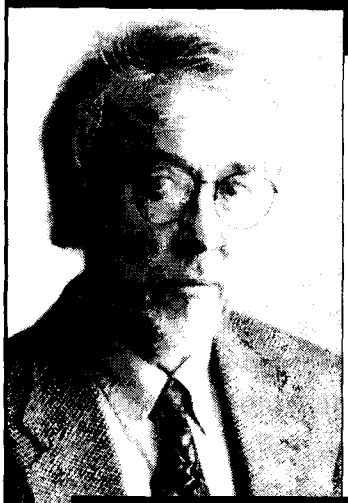
# The Lineaments of Wrath

## Race, Violent Crime, and American Culture



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She knows that she was illegitimate and, with the connivance of her adoptive mother, she has spun out a fantasy about being the daughter of an aristocrat and a lowly parlor maid at his estate. To confirm the fantasy, or a version of it, she applies for a copy of her original birth certificate. Now, at last, she will learn who she truly is. She is Rose Ducton, the daughter of Mary Ducton and Martin John Ducton. And, as it so happens, they are child killers. Her biological father has died in prison. Her mother, who strangled a little girl whom her husband had assaulted sexually, is still in prison, but she is due to be released on parole after nine years.

Hilda and Maurice—Philippa's adoptive parents—bemoan the new law. "Breaking faith with adopters," they call it. They have not told Philippa that her lack of memory of her childhood is owed to the fact that her "real" mother, in addition to murdering one child who had wandered mistakenly onto her parents' street, had also beaten her and fractured her skull, causing trauma that left her with mere fragments of the first seven years of her life. Her adoptive parents feared that detailed knowledge of Philippa's history might prove devastating. But now Philippa is discovering the truth, and she decides to make contact with her biological mother, who "can help me to find out who I am."

She visits her biological mother in prison and arranges for the two of them to live together for a summer. It will turn out fine; after all, she already knows "the worst." But she doesn't. Ahead lie the revelations of her mother's hatred of her; of her mother's inability to love her; and of her mother's inflicting a skull injury on her. So the biological fact of how she was forced into the world, the "blood which first bathed me," finally does not confer a clear and sturdy identity. Sorting out one's biological origins is not the magical lodestone after all.

It is an extreme tale, no doubt. But adoption seems to inspire extreme responses, positive and negative. There was a time in our recent history when adoption was treated with transports of enthusiasm. *Blossoms in the Dust*, a film that appeared in 1941, starring Greer Garson and Walter Pigeon, was a hagiography of Edna Gladney, who founded the Texas Children's Home and Aid Society, placing over 2,000 children with adoptive families. The film portrays Gladney's crusade against the very notion of illegitimate birth—"there are no illegitimate babies"—and for easing restrictions on adoption.

To accomplish the latter, she must demolish the former, and repudiate the idea that an illegitimate child somehow bears an ineradicable biological taint. Gladney's adoptive sister had committed suicide upon learning of her own illicit origins. In the film, this knowledge is borne down upon her by the sister's fiancé's battle-axe of a mother, who declares that her upstanding boy will never marry the daughter of a whore, or some such delicate formulation. With this terrible incident, as well as the tragic death of her own son as backdrop, Gladney founds her benevolent institution. She starts out small, taking in a few waifs. It is not long before she has more children than Mia Farrow.

Gladney decides to go into the adoption business. The fight for the "little ones" is highly sentimentalized, replete with a "Gallery of Notable Orphans" mounted on the agency's walls. Gladney's enemies are the "good ladies" of the town, obnoxious Nosy Parkers who traffic in stereotypes of illegitimate children condemned to live as "creatures of shame," and quite rightly, too, in their eyes. Gladney is the force of enlightenment, calling for "love, sympathy, understanding" rather than law and intolerance. There are "no illegitimate babies—only illegitimate parents."

Then the laws in Texas are changed. Birth certificates will no longer register illegitimacy. The film opens with "America the Beautiful," and closes with "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him" as the snow falls and two new tykes are taken under Edna's expansive wing. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy with a screenplay by Anita Loos, *Blossoms in the Dust* was nominated for four Academy Awards. We may chortle at its lack of sophistication now, but the film is still good for a heart tug, because it is based on a deeply moral intuition. Anyone past the age of forty remembers that children often bore the negative brunt of society's concern with marital order, stability, and legitimacy, as if any break in the line of biological lineage presaged social chaos.

This is not to say that the history of adoption in America is a matter of sentimentality and saintly figures. There was certainly nothing sentimental or saintly about the "orphan trains" of the mid-1880s. They were the brain-child of a child rescuer named Charles Loring Brace. (Carp's book tells his story.) Reverend Brace organized the "most influential of charity organizations" dealing with children at risk (as we are now wont to call them), the Children's Aid Society, in 1853. For Brace, "placing out" was superior to orphanages, almshouses, and reformatories. It promised to transform little "vagabonds and homeless creatures" into "decent,



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orderly, industrious children." Beginning in 1854, some 20,000 Eastern children were initially "placed out" in the Western states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa, followed by Missouri and Kansas. By 1890, some 84,000 children had been sent from East to West on so-called "orphan trains."

Brace's view reflected a controversial aspect of the child-placement system of the nineteenth century, which Carp describes as "a decided preference for breaking up biological families in order to 'save' children." But some biological families more than others: Catholics charged, with good evidence, that the sacrosanct blood tie seemed not to extend to inner-city immigrant Catholic families. Carp calls it "an aggressive and covert form of Protestant proselytizing." For Brace seemed to believe that, in the case of these neglected or drifting children, it was better to break up the family, if only temporarily, so that children got a proper American (read: Protestant) upbringing.

Children who were sent out on the orphan trains later told of how they were lined up at train stops, or hauled off to a church or school, to be "picked" by local farmers. Unfortunate children were kept moving from town to town, never being picked, sometimes disappearing without a trace. These "distributions" of children continued for 75 years. There were committees that supposedly checked the qualifications of potential foster parents. Children who were picked were expected to work, and adoption was by no means guaranteed. Some veterans of the orphan trains reported good outcomes, with love and eventual adoption by their foster families; but others described being treated like slaves and never entering the household at all. The separation of siblings was common. And this was the "enlightened" approach of the time.

Carp argues that the large-scale placing-out movement had enormous consequences for the history of adoption in America. Worried about the lack of regulation of adoption, state legislatures in the middle of the nineteenth century began enacting general adoption statutes. The Massachusetts Adoption Act of 1851 was the first law to establish the principle of judicial supervision of adoptions, requiring that a judge ascertain that adoptive parents were of "sufficient ability to bring up the child, before issuing the decree." Adoptive parents were legally required to "furnish suitable nurture and education." In general, a magistrate had to be satisfied that the adoption was fit and proper.

The law also ended the power of natural parents over the children whom they


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**THE LOGIC OF LIBERTY**
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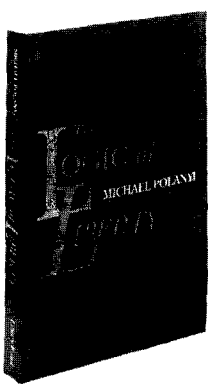


A chemist and member of a family renowned for its learning in several disciplines, Michael Polanyi experienced first-hand the horrors of totalitarian government and worldwide war. Consequently there is a singular weight to Polanyi's challenge to advocates of centrally planned scientific inquiry or the centrally planned implementation of scientific discovery. He argued that organizations—or governments—based solely on the methods of science threaten to foreclose a full human knowledge of the mysteries of existence and therefore pose a direct threat not only to academic freedom but to social and political liberty. The very triumphs of science in the modern era, Polanyi believed, at least affect and sometimes threaten liberty: "Our discovery and acceptance of scientific knowledge is a commitment to certain beliefs which we hold, but which others may refuse to share." This fateful interrelationship between science and liberty in our time is given supreme and elegant reflection in ***The Logic of Liberty***.

**Michael Polanyi** (1891–1976) was an internationally renowned scientist, philosopher, and professor whose other works included *Personal Knowledge* and *The Tacit Dimension*.

**Stuart D. Warner** is Professor of Philosophy at Roosevelt University, Chicago.

256 + xxi pages. Foreword, preface, acknowledgments, bibliography, index.

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relinquished, by severing all legal bonds between them and freeing the child from all legal obligations to them. Thus the Massachusetts Adoption Act, in Carp's words, marked "a watershed in the history of Anglo-American family and society. Instead of defining the parent-child relationship exclusively in terms of blood kinship, it encouraged adoptive parents to build a family by assuming the responsibility and emotional outlook of natural parents." Parenting was conceived in more moral and social terms. The parent was defined not by genealogy, but by the long, hard work of loving care. A decent nurture was preferred to the claims of nature.

This preference was codified by a "Final Order of Adoption," which read that the "parental rights and responsibilities" of the relinquishing parents are "hereby terminated forever." The child is

> hereafter deemed the lawful child of Petitioners, the same as if the child had been born to them, for all legal consequences and incidents of the biological relation of parent and children ... including the capability of inheriting real and personal property from the Petitioners and their descendants, including other adopted children within the adoptive family.... The adopted child shall have the same such rights as lineal and collateral kindred of the Petitioners....

Then likely follows the new naming of the child, unless the adoption is of a newborn.

The Massachusetts statute became the model statute; twenty-five states enacted similar laws in the nineteenth century, and the half-century of child welfare reform efforts that followed upon the heels of this judicial requirement helped to bring about the professionalization and the bureaucratization of social work. Modern adoption, according to Carp, is in large part the creation of child-saving as a profession. And the professionals could point to a terrible prehistory, when private orphanages, some of them grotesquely hideous, were the rule, or when children were institutionalized with adult criminals, paupers, and the "insane," as well as being sent West on orphan trains. Child welfare reformers believed that large-scale institutions might work for some purposes, but for the purpose of saving and placing children, foster care and adoption were the best course.

There was a larger public purpose here, as Carp characterizes the aims of the child-saving movement, namely "to produce sociable, independent, and industrious citizens at little expense." Although the language strikes us as cloying and tendentious, it is important to remember that the alternatives for children abandoned and abused were not rosy. Nor are they rosy now. The contemporary failures of the foster care system are all around us. All the respectable research shows that adoptive parents do a better job of raising children than foster parents.

Yet foster care survives alongside adoption as the way America provides for children who are not being cared for. Foster care is very expensive; it costs states about $17,000 per child per year. The average foster child lives with at least three different families, and often with many more. And with adoption currently languishing, foster care seems the only way to spare children from the not-so-tender ministrations of parents who are criminals, drug addicts, and abusers. For its justification, the foster care system appeals to the doctrine of "family preservation" at all costs, a doctrine that waxes and wanes in the favor with which it is embraced by professional child-savers.

At the moment, certainly, "family reunification" rules the roost under a federal law passed in 1980, with the very best interests of children in mind. The very best interests of children are always involved, at least in theory. It is now very difficult to take children away from demonstrably abusive biological parents, especially mothers, who now keep their children in overwhelming numbers, as they did not in the past. A full 96 percent of unmarried teenage mothers now retain the child or children whom they have borne, and many of them spurn adoption.

This is a situation that is proving disastrous for the overwhelming majority of the babies involved, and it is certainly detrimental to the overwhelming majority of the teenage mothers. Yet this terrible predicament is quite understandable, given the ways in which the superiority of biological kinship has been reasserted in recent decades, not only in law but also in politics and culture—and in the "adoptees rights" movement. Combine the new prestige of blood with the collapse of any stigma surrounding out-of-wedlock birth, and you have what might be called a crisis of care in America; and this crisis will be with us for years to come in high rates of cognitively deprived, asocialized children, and teenage girls dropping out of school with subsequent high rates of unemployment and drug abuse.

Carp cites studies that show that teenagers who give up their babies for adoption are more likely to finish school and to end up in modestly decent situations than teenagers who refuse to give up their babies, and are consequently at greater risk on every possible scale. The same studies also show that, as teenagers, adopted children are no more likely than nonadopted teenagers to suffer from major problems. Carp also denounces biological "privileging" in his book—but then, for some unfathomable reason, he chooses to celebrate the record numbers of teenagers giving birth and keeping babies as the "empowerment of unwed mothers." This is a book that unwittingly displays American society's own deep ambivalence about biological parenting, social parenting, and adoption.

Trying to get a clear picture of what is going on is not easy. This much is clear: voluntary, church-based, nonprofit societies that once placed children for adoption have gone belly-up across the country. Carp tells the story of the adoption home for which he worked as he did his research, the Children's Home Society of Washington, which in the 1960s averaged 421 adoptions a year. It ceased placing children for adoption in 1973, because of a shortage of "Caucasian infants." Carp sees this case as representative of what has happened more generally to adoption in our recent past.

The implication is that we are suffering from a dearth of "suitable" babies for adoption. This spurs infertile or charitable Americans to seek foreign adoptions. It should be noted that this search for foreign babies was abetted, in part, by the fact that in the years before *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, many of the nation's adoption agencies "began placing an increasing number of African American children for adoption"—a kind of anticipation of the integration imperative, one might suggest. Disabled, older, and foreign-born children were also placed. Carp claims that this was the "first time in history" that "relatively large numbers of Western couples," mostly Americans, adopted children who were "racially and culturally different from themselves." Surely this was a kind of high-water mark of the idealistic insistence that we are called to love and to serve others, even in this most demanding and intimate way, without distinction.

In the decade between 1953 and 1962, some 15,000 children adopted from within the United States fit this bill, as did some 32,000 foreign-born children, adopted between 1966 and 1976, primarily from the Republic of Korea. Carp sees a "deep humanitarianism at work," spawned partly by revulsion at racism and its consequences in World War II. But then other moral and cultural imperatives were loosed in the land. Inter-



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God is a dangerous idea—whether animistic or vitalistic, theistic or deistic—perverting justice in ethics and politics. Of ancient philosophies Epicureanism alone disposed of this problem with coherent doctrines about chance/necessary interaction of atoms, about evolutionary development, and about basic biological drives. The historical Jesus agreed more with this than with Judaism—more atheist/realist than theist/idealist—as indicated by a recently unearthed document that claims to be enigmatic *ipsissima verba* of Jesus noted by an evidently puzzled student who wandered with him. Jack Hannah corroborates this claim with other independent ancient documents. All pertinent texts and commentary are provided.

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racial adoption, at least where black babies going to white families was concerned, came under fire in the late 1960s, fueled by the Black Power movement. In 1972, Audrey T. Russell, president of the Alliance of Black Social Workers in Philadelphia, called transracial adoption a "diabolical trick," a "lethal incursion on the black family.... It needs to be stopped." The then-president of the National Association of Black Social Workers announced that black children should remain in foster homes or institutions rather than being adopted by 'white families.'

Of course, one might suggest that the most "lethal" inroad into the black family in America in the past four decades has been the exponential leap in the number of children born out of wedlock and growing up without a father and without adequate mothering, despite the heroic efforts of some single mothers and many of their mothers and grandmothers. But the case against transracial adoption proved to be remarkably effective. Social workers did not defend it, even though they privately held that a "white home" was better than no home at all. The outcome was a refusal to place "black children with white parents. As a result transracial adoption declined steeply," according to Carp, as black children languished in the twilight zone of foster care and no care. And one of the reasons for their misery was that a form of biological fundamentalism had trumped the claims of social morality.

So couples sought babies elsewhere. The results have been mixed. The vast majority of Korean adoptees seem to be faring very well indeed; but there are the horror stories about Eastern-bloc adoptions, especially about children from Romania, to which many American couples turned after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Given the shortage of available infants domestically, Americans rushed to adopt children who had been cruelly warehoused by the awful communist regime—and so were troubled, even deeply disturbed, suffering from all the ills of nonattachment and "failure to thrive." Perhaps they assumed that such children would work out as well, on average, as had Korean-adopted infants; but they failed to take into account that the preadoptive care received by Korean children was a veritable utopia by comparison to discarded children in various parts of the Soviet Empire, Romania being the most disgusting case.

Rarely held, or talked to, or even touched as infants, many of these Eastern-bloc adoptees proved to be more than their adoptive American parents could handle. The children were swamped with learning disabilities and emotional troubles of all sorts, beginning at the very beginning with an "inability to bond." In 1996, some 3,700 children were adopted by Americans from Russia and Eastern Europe. Estimates are that about one-third of them do all right; another third develop and adjust slowly; and the remaining third remain in the danger zone—and families cannot manage angry, disruptive children who present a danger not only to themselves but also to others. It turns out that John Bowlby and the other developmental psychologists who stressed the essential importance of early infant bonding with a caring figure were right.

The "damage is irreparable," writes one neuropsychologist who has treated 1,000 children from the Eastern bloc. Despite heroic efforts, specialists are seeing a big rise in failed adoptions, which are known as "disruptions." It is not a new phenomenon, of course; but disruption has gained renewed attention in light of the larger numbers of failed foreign adoptions. A "normal" disruption rate for domestic adoptions runs at about 6.5 percent of all adoptions. No accurate figures exist for Eastern bloc disruption rates, but expert observers indicate that it is much, much higher. The longer a child has been in institutional care, the greater the likelihood of major cognitive, emotional, even physical damage; the more difficult the adoption; and the more likely a "disruption."

Stories such as these only deepen our perplexity about adoption. Disillusioned and defeated parents speak of the collapse of their belief that a loving home, much care and attention, safety, material plenty, and a wonderful school could all correct for early years of neglect. A horrific early lack of nurture may defeat "nature," so to speak, and, as a result, a child never will develop "normally." Our American confidence that nearly every situation can be put right is profoundly challenged by the presence of these desperate and even dangerous children.

It is worth recalling an earlier era when families were spooked by bringing a child with "bad blood" into the home. Carp tells the tale, in which Progressive reformers are the main players. In 1921, the Sheppard-Towner Infancy and Maternity Protection Act provided federal funding to promote infant and maternal health. Family preservation was the rule of thumb among child-savers; and according to Carp, this ideal "remained axiomatic among professional social workers until the end of World War II." During the first third of



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the twentieth century, therefore, there was not much increase in adoption. Carp claims that our genealogical obsession "stigmatized adoption as socially unacceptable"; to this was added the eugenics movement and its fear of inherited feeble-mindedness, which was more fuel to the anti-adoption fire. Between 1910 and 1925, when eugenics was at the height of its influence, "feebleminded" unwed mothers were separated from their children and their putatively "defective" children were institutionalized. This sometimes included coerced sterilization of "mentally defective" institutionalized women.

Enter the United States Children's Bureau, headed by Julia Lathrop, a protégé of the great Jane Addams of Hull House. The first woman to head a federal bureau, Lathrop mandated research to find out what was really happening to American children, especially those who fell between the cracks; she published standards for foster care; she pushed local governments and private agencies to do more with displaced infants and parents; and she moved, over time, to shut down "adoption mills" that accepted payment for babies. Far-reaching changes in adoption policy, spurred by these early efforts, continued apace, Carp claims, all the way through the 1970s.

Slowly American attitudes toward adoption changed. Eugenics was given rather a bad name by the Nazis. There was a renaissance of humanitarianism in America. A "pro-natalist mood" led to a nine-fold increase in adoptions over a thirty-year period from roughly 1937 to 1965. By 1960, adoption was "riding high": a respected institution that expanded our understanding of the family, that was carefully regulated, and that appeared to promote the "best interests of the child" by, among other things, guaranteeing that the child's preadoption biological connections were severed.

And so the stage was set for another upheaval. The issue this time concerned the truth about the adopted child's origins. The child welfare reformers of the Progressive Era insisted upon the secrecy of those origins. Lathrop's Children's Bureau took the lead by commissioning a massive study, *Illegitimacy as a Child Welfare Problem*, which appeared in 1920. Not only did the study call for greater regulation of adoption by states, it also marked the beginning of the argument for confidentiality, according to Carp. The aim was to prevent public snooping by "curious and unscrupulous persons" who might want to "unmask" a woman who had given birth but relinquished the baby for adoption secretly, or to forestall attempts to blackmail adoptive parents by threatening to reveal that little Janie or little Jimmy was "illegitimate." The official position of the Children's Bureau was that natural parents should not be permitted to reenter the picture and disrupt an adoptive family.

Still, until around 1970, "adult adoptees and natural parents who wished to receive information could easily gain access from a variety of sources." Privacy was not construed as absolute secrecy. The document most sought out was the birth certificate. Confidentiality remained the norm, primarily to "shield" the unwed mother's reputation, but Carp's research convinces him that child welfare activists never intended to prevent "children born out of wedlock, or adopted children, from viewing their own birth records" at some point safely removed from the adoption itself. But this got tricky because, by 1941, 35 states had "enacted legislation instructing registries of vital statistics to issue new birth certificates" using the adopted name of the child in place of the original one.

When they became adults, adoptees sometimes requested information on their family of origin "whether out of natural curiosity, as a matter of right, or from psychological need," and natural parents did the same thing. Social workers, behaving like good bureaucrats, had acquired the habit of amassing huge "case files" on adoptees packed with every conceivable piece of information that they could get about adopted children and their families of origin. The question was: To whom should such information be made available? For what reasons? Under what conditions?

The available evidence suggests that, before the mid-1960s, only a small number of adoptees or birth parents sought out such information. Since the 1940s, the country had been in the midst of an adoption boom, influenced by *The Chosen Baby*, a book supported by the Children's Bureau, by Dr. Valentine P. Wasson, a kind of Dr. Spock for adoptees. This book included instructions for adoptive parents on when and how to explain to the adopted child that he or she was adopted—no, chosen; and this was to be done in a way that minimized any confusion or trauma. And lessening the trauma fueled the quest for greater secrecy. What could be more traumatic than to learn that your father had been a criminal, or your mother a drunk? What could be more alarming than a biological parent turning up on the doorstep a decade or more later, seeking a relationship with a child whom he or she had relinquished? Better by


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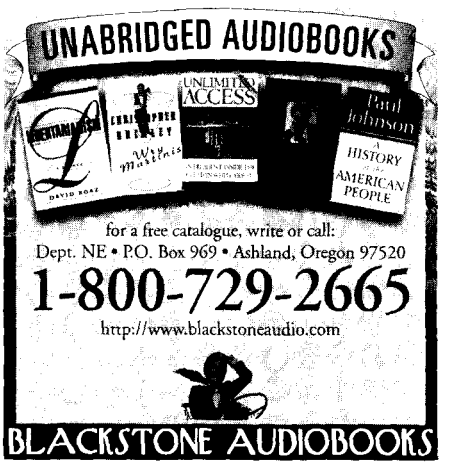





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far, the argument went, for adoptive parents to offer the child a version of his or her past with which the child could live: your mommy loved you but couldn't take care of you, your daddy went to war and never came back....

Carp does not have a very convincing explanation for the success of the party of "closed records." He argues that Progressive reformers sought only confidentiality. The passion for secrecy, a kind of black-out of the child's origins, was another matter. Carp relates it to obscure forces operative in American life; even Watergate comes into it. But surely the overriding concern here was, according to Carp, the preservation of the "integrity of the adoption process." Also, many natural mothers "desperately" wanted to "start a new life" minus the "stigma" of having borne an illegitimate child.

Still, with the advent of the 1960s, the almost total breakdown of a culture of shame, and the concomitant rise in the social acceptability of premarital sex and the diminution of the "stigma" of illegitimacy, together with the medicalization and the psychologization of nearly every social and political question, controversies soon erupted over "secrecy," and "openness" came to be favored in all things. With the triumph of the New Candor, the adoption rights movement was born, inaugurating what Carp calls "a reassessment of the legitimacy of secrecy in all aspects of adoption." He remarks that it is a debate that is "unresolved today."

To say the least. Indeed, Carp himself starts to unravel a bit on this question. He talks about the birth of a grassroots movement—ARM, or the Adoption Rights Movement, spearheaded by Jean M. Paton, a middle-age adopted social worker, whose legacy "gave adoptees a voice." Then we get a curious riff on the "conservative, conformist 1950s," when, presumably, postwar humanitarian impulses had prevailed and adoption received honor as a distinct and respected alternative to the biological family, something Carp ought to celebrate given his denigration of our biological obsessiveness. Instead, the politics of biological identity is restored to his admiration, because he wishes to identify with ARM as part of the "rights revolution" of the 1970s.

Carp now takes to referring to biological mothers as the "real" mothers, by contrast to "adoptive" mothers, who fall into the shadows. We get some boilerplate about "egalitarian, participatory democracy that questioned all existing systems of authority based on hierarchy, expertise, or wealth." He is for empowerment and loving communities, and he is against atomism and alienation. The "generation" of the 1960s is credited with miracles: ending legal segregation, shortening the Vietnam War, stigmatizing racism and sexism, destigmatizing sexual experimentation and sexual openness, all leading to a "more egalitarian society." The point of all this, presumably, is to envelop the adoption rights movement in the great '60s halo. It, too, was a part of the eruption of all good things.

Carp is aware that many of the anti-adoption assertions of ARM's leaders were harmful. He even recognizes that they were essentially ideological claims that preferred biology to the detriment of everything else. Wanting to have it both ways, Carp's argument grows muddled. By the time we get to an outrage such as the Baby Richard case of 1995, when a three-year-old was removed from the only family that he had ever known, including an older brother, and placed with a biological father who was a stranger (and with his wife, who was not the child's biological mother), Carp offers little more than a whimper of protest.

By the 1990s, the Adoption Rights Movement's relentless insistence on the superiority of blood had deepened, if not generated, a "bias" toward biological kinship in all ugly custodial battles. As a result, Anna Freud's earlier canonical notions of "psychological parenting" and "the best interests of the child" were challenged in the courts by the apparent certainties of biologism.

Why have we reentered a realm in which biological "essentialism" becomes the key to identity? And why does this biological fundamentalism become identified with the liberal point of view—open adoption, adoptee rights, even a family identity movement? Consider a curious discussion in Aviam Soifer's recent book *Law and the Company We Keep*. Soifer works himself up into a fine fury over Justice Scalia's reasoning in *Michael H.* v. *Gerald D.*, a California case having to do with family identity that made its way to the Supreme Court with a decision handed down in 1989. A lower court had "precluded a biological father from introducing as evidence blood tests that provided clear evidence of his paternity," paternity that the biological mother had acknowledged. The biological father, whose contact with the child had been haphazard, to say the least, sought not just recognition but the status of legal parent. A plurality of the Court decided against him, arguing that the biological mother's husband was by definition the child's father, owing to his marital relationship to the mother, and to the fact that the child in question was born "during the marriage"; he was, therefore, the only father this child had ever known.

The child in question was eight years old; but her tender years notwithstanding, Soifer describes this little girl as "joining" her biological father in a "constitutional challenge" to the California court. The reasoning grows downright eerie, as a decision favoring the claims of social identity, of *actual* identity, is attacked by Soifer in the name of a biological relation that had nothing to do with parenting. Soifer denounces Scalia for siding with the California court's decision, thereby favoring extant law "over nature." The "natural father and his daughter" are constituted by Soifer as "dissenters" devoted to a "pluralistic approach"—even if this means granting legal parental rights and a liberty interest based on a "3-month sojourn in St. Thomas" (Scalia's words from the decision)—and this pluralistic approach contrasts to "Scalia's bizarre notion of tradition" in giving the legal father-for-eight-years precedence over the claims of the biological father.

This seems strange; but it is really not so strange, when one considers that the adoption rights movement is now a member in good standing of American identity politics. For this reason, the adoption rights movement is a fascinating case that permits us to assess the interplay of powerful, contradictory forces in American culture. Thus Katarina Wegar, herself an adoptee, supports reforms giving adoptees, birth mothers, and birth fathers the legal right to find out about one another. She takes "very seriously the desire of adoptees to know their biological origins"; but, at the same time, she challenges "the ideological assumptions and the practical political consequences of what I call the 'new psychology of the adopted.'"

In a nutshell, Wegar fears that many advocates of open adoption, those who wish to destroy all confidentiality and who insist that everybody should know everybody and everything, assume certain negative universal character traits of adoptees—an "adopted child syndrome"—that openness alone can cure. For in this way, they optimistically conclude, adoptees who are now, as a matter of course, tormented psychologically will find that the psychic "estrangement" and heartache from which they would otherwise have suffered, under the old rules of confidentiality, are no more. Wegar challenges this presumption of uniform negative traits spawned by the rule of confidentiality in adoption as part of her



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"feminist critique of adoption," though why this is feminist is not entirely clear save for Wegar's frequent swipes at the "patriarchal order."

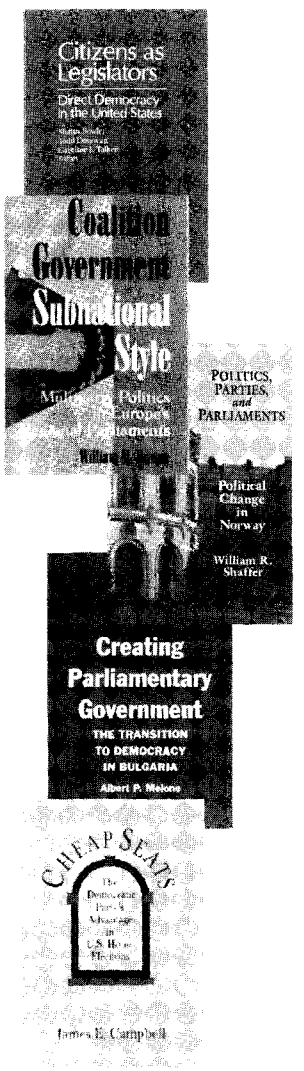
Wegar illustrates the complex politics of adoption, in which adoptee rights advocacy groups and Concerned United Birthparents (CUB) are pitted against analogous organizations of adoptive parents who oppose an end to confidentiality in adoption. She shares with Carp a blistering criticism of the work of the child psychiatrist Arthur Sorosky and the social workers Annette Baran and Reuben Pannor, who have become, in Carp's words, the "intellectual patron saints of the adoption rights movement." Manifesting little or no sympathy with adoptive parents who feared "opening adoption files," Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor "used pejorative language couched in psychological jargon to condemn what they identified as adoptive parents' overprotectiveness and inflexible child-rearing techniques." Adoptive parents, in the Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor lexicon, become controlling bad guys who won't let the sun shine in; adoptees are their victims. Biological parents, by contrast, are cast as another group of victims of the adoption system, bereft people who spend their lives searching or yearning to search for the children whom they have given up. Wegar will have none of this and argues against it as part of a quest for "identity essentialism."

Carp goes after the methodology of this same research, claiming that it ignores a mountain of data indicating that fully 95 percent of adopted children are never referred to professionals for therapeutic help; this despite the claim by Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor that adoptees are uniquely vulnerable psychologically, hence many times more likely to wind up on the couch or in the psychiatric ward, and so on. Elinor Rosenberg, a sympathetic psychologist, unwittingly provides evidence of just how widespread are the views that Carp and Wegar declare bogus when she claims that there is "consistently reported" evidence that adoptees are "overrepresented in ... inpatient and residential treatment centers." Not so. There is no evidence to back this up, despite the influential, but incorrect, Sorosky–Baran–Pannor bandwagon. Thus Rosenberg, in an otherwise sensible discussion of developmental stages in adoptive families—pretty much the same as in all families, as it so happens—repeats the canard about the fragile mental health of adoptees several times and explains it with the locution "genealogical discontinuity," or the sense that something is missing.

The "something is missing" scenario helped to fuel what Wegar calls a "new psychology of adoption" and generated sometimes overheated representations in television docudramas of "The Search." The docudrama outcome is almost always a happy one: an adoptee and a parent renew contact, reconnect, find that they recognize each other, and love each other immediately. And the accommodating adoptive parents learn that they can live with it.

Yet real life does not conform to this fantasy. In Great Britain, birth certificates are available to adoptees upon request; but Wegar claims that the number of searchers in any given year is as low as 1 percent, with only 15 percent searching sometime during a lifetime. The adoptees who do search are "predominantly white, middle-class females in young adulthood," and the overwhelming majority are searching for their biological mothers. And it also turns out that exposure to advocacy groups itself acts as a goad to searching, and as a catalyst for the view that something is wanting in one's life.

Wegar's analysis of search scenarios is disconcerting to read. Adoptive parents are often part of an "evil scene." Adoption agencies are also evil, though searchers are invariably noble. Adoption is "pathologized" in much of this mate-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## *Ships*

I am given to mistaking
the rumble of cranes around dawn
for dry shapeless thunder at sea,
going weeks on end without sleep.

*

Her father tended the pile light
like an allotment of lettuce,
too wordless in times and levels
to care, too fogbound to notice.

*

I've come around to thinking ships
are the only visible bridge
between the earth's darkened centre
and its sunlit peripheries.

*

Just once, I called her bluff between
the grain stores and two waves of heat.
Days after, on a rush hour train,
her salt was still on my fingers.

*

Lately I find I can lie here
listing their grey ports in my head—
Hull and Bergen and Bilbao
and Riga—without drifting off.

*

I have taken it all on board:
her distance and her brother's death
and her big wedding to a prick
of a stevedore from abroad.

*

Behind the chimney smoke at eight
and the park and pitch-and-putt flags
and the by-pass, a coal freighter's
constellation edges away.

*

Just once let me be her husband,
climbing in behind her after
a twelve hour shift, stirring her with
sweet nothings in a foreign tongue.

**CONOR O'CALLAGHAN**

rial, whether literature or film. True motherhood is once again equated with biological motherhood. Adoptive mothers are represented as rigid and cold; birth mothers are represented as loving and emotionally giving, and heartbroken by the relinquishment of the child because they "loved the child so much" many years earlier.

You would think that it is the destiny of nearly every adoptee to set out on "the quest," though this is not the case. Some of those who did seek and did find tell their stories in *The Adoption Reader*. A few of the stories are quite powerful, but some are sheer drivel. One Robyn Flatley tells the story of "My Son," about a reconnection with a biological offspring after "twenty-six years of silence." She describes talking to her bio-son on the phone every night for a week. "His intimate sharing was somehow erotic." Then they meet. Her body shakes "with recognition, and my uterus went wild, contracting into spasms. I had become eighteen years old again. But my baby was too big to cuddle and too old to breast-feed. He was a twenty-six-year-old man; I wanted my newborn baby back." It gets worse. "'I feel dizzy, like I'm in love with you,' I said shivering.... I yearned to embrace him." He, who appears to have a bit of sense, responds: "You know, this is confusing for us both. I will never make love with you; it's against my beliefs." She: "He was dead serious." And she continues: "I felt cheated and relieved. I wanted him inside of me and the only way I could have that again was to have this man. I cried as the rain bathed my face." One wants to cry out to this young man: run for your life!

Kathleen Scully Davis's story of reconnecting with her adult biological daughter starts out highly romanticized, but it issues in exemplary good sense: "That woman / child / baby belonged to Pat and Louie [the adoptive parents], to that house, to that life. It was exactly as it was meant to be." This accords with what one birth mother cited by Carp remarks: "I'm a woman who gave birth. I'm not a mother.... The woman who raised my child contributed her whole life. She's the real mother, not me." These words are so obviously true, one finds oneself almost pathetically grateful for them.

These stories establish that there is no unified paradigm, no certain outcome, no single story of either adoption or the search. Wegar wisely asks whether or not it might be possible to acknowledge the needs and even the grief of relinquishing parents, most often mothers, without going on to claim that the biological mother alone is the real mother. But the psychopathological approach has to pathologize someone; and these days it is the turn of the adoptive parents to take the rap.

Carp himself winds up advocating a kind of middle way, a mix of confidentiality and access to records, as opposed to those who favor holding onto the strictest norms of secrecy and those who seem to think that adoption should be a never-ending encounter group. Pannor and Baran go so far as to call for an end to adoption, because it distorts children by definition, condemning them to a nether world of identity confusion and alienation from their origins. There is also a loopy proposal, credited to Pannor and Baran, that something called "guardianship adoption" be instituted. Presumably, the folks charged with the task of providing day to day care, nurturance, education, and the rest would be the child's guardians, on guard never to supplant the "real" parents in the child's life.

This is crazy. If the guardians do all the parenting, then how are the biological parents parents? Surely it is plain for all with eyes to see that adoption does not harm children, that it is generally a blessing for children; and that the agents of that blessing are none other than the adoptive parents. *They* are the people who are there for the trips to the dentist, the first day of school, the nightmare, the driving lesson, the math fiasco, the first date, the soccer score, all the stuff of the quotidian. The overwhelming majority of biological parents are parents in this sense. And from the standpoint of the children, which is the only standpoint that should matter most, what other sense of parenthood is there?

The best that Carp can do, by way of conclusion, is to concede that the case that "traditional adoption is inherently harmful" has not been made. But the case that children suffer when they are not reared in a sustained atmosphere of love, concern, learning, and discipline has most certainly been made, and made again. We rightly favor biological families to do this work, in part because most of the time it is precisely what biological families do, what they are there for. When biological parenting does not work, however, there is a noble alternative, a human grace that has stood the test of time. It is based on something more profound than blood. It is based on love. •



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**The fertile limitations of Lawrence Durrell.**

# *A Small Blond Firework*

**By Peter Green**

Lawrence Durrell is best known today as the author of *The Alexandria Quartet*, which brought him fame and fortune, and as the brother of the popular naturalist and zoo-keeper Gerald Durrell, whose own writings reached a far wider public. The success of the *The Alexandria Quartet*, for complicated reasons only partially explained in Ian MacNiven's and Gordon Bowker's biographies, proved in every sense a poisoned gift. The lifelong sibling rivalry between Larry and Gerry, which both affected to enjoy, provided more laughs for Gerry, and not only in terms of worldly success.

His sly and nostalgic account of the Durrells' prewar life on Corfu, *My Family and Other Animals*, is one of the most exquisitely funny autobiographies ever written. But it was a book in which Gerry—besides ignoring the existence of Larry's first wife Nancy, who was very much there on the island—also pricked the balloon of his elder brother's self-absorbed literary pretensions, with affectionate but deadly precision. After reading that book, it is hard to take Durrell's *obiter dicta* about relativity and the unstable ego quite as seriously as he might have wished.

Gerry's summing-up of his brother distills, in one sharp sentence, most of what MacNiven and Bowker take hundreds of pages to establish: "Larry was designed by Providence to go through life like a small blond firework, exploding ideas in other people's minds, and then curling up with catlike unctuousness and refusing to take any blame for the consequences." The various other factors involved—in a life that stretched from a British Raj childhood, spent under the shadow of the Himalayas, to resentful and sodden old age as an imitation peasant in rural Provence—form a cautionary compendium of just about all the endemic hazards to which a professional English writer, Irish by ancestry and born early in this century, could fall victim.

The hazards were these. First, and most common, compulsive addictions: to alcohol (as a social lubricant and later as an anaesthetic refuge) and to sex (in Durrell's case hetero, with a marked element of domination laced with violence). Next, an Indian upbringing in the twilight of empire, to an expectation, never fulfilled, of enlightened authority over well-loved lesser breeds. Then, a determination to live by writing, broken only by stints in the diplomatic and allied services, and combined with chronic extravagance and ineptitude over the handling of money. Throw in an ultra-virulent version of the Mediterranean expatriate urge, mainly fueled by a loathing for "Pudding Island" (a.k.a. England), sauce with those unpredictably feckless Irish genes, and top off with the bypassing of a university education, and you have the resultant Durrell mixture. It was explosive, intermittently brilliant, and, in the last resort, lethal: to others, but most of all to himself.

*Lawrence Durrell: A Biography*
by Ian MacNiven
(Faber and Faber, 801 pp., $36.95)

*Through the Dark Labyrinth: A Biography of Lawrence Durrell*
by Gordon Bowker
(St. Martin's Press, 480 pp., $29.95)

*Lawrence Durrell's Major Novels, or The Kingdom of the Imagination*
by Donald P. Kaczvinsky
(Susquehanna University Press, 183 pp., $33.50)

Lawrence George Durrell was born in 1912, eldest son of an Anglo-Indian railway engineer. The Durrells had served the British Raj for generations. Their ancestors had been army rankers: Durrell's father was respectable, but he dreamed of higher status. There were rumors of Indian blood in the family tree, and Eurasians (something that neither MacNiven nor Bowker stresses) enjoyed an unspoken near-monopoly of the subcontinent's flourishing railroad industry. Not from the wrong side of the tracks then, these Durrells, but certainly not top-drawer (as the phrase went) either.

So it was in pursuit of social betterment that Samuel Durrell packed off young Larry to England at the age of eleven, sights set on that magical Oxbridge edu-


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cation that would open all doors, guarantee status, and admit to the privileged inner circle. None of this, of course, hit the victim of the experiment till much later. What Durrell felt, like Kipling before him, was an immense sense of betrayal, combined with violent nostalgia for a lost Oriental paradise—a loving ayah, exotic bazaars, Tibet gleaming enticingly beyond the horizon, the sense of being a pukka sahib; and this paradise grew ever more beautiful in retrospect.

What he got instead was Pudding Island: the cold, damp, unimaginative, sexless, puritanical, snobbish, class-ridden, hypocritical England (as he saw it) of the 1920s. The sense of displacement ran deep, and sharpened his yearning. A.E. Housman's vision was his, too: "That is the land of lost content,/ I see it shining plain,/ The happy highways where I went/ And cannot come again." Social pressures augmented his discontent. In England, far from being a pukka sahib guaranteed devoted service, he was no more than a "colonial brat," looked down on by offspring of the Home Counties. Nothing could better have fostered the seeds of rebellion, and Bowker surely is dead on target when he writes:

> Like many alienated young people he inverted the values he despised.... If the hated English were screwed up about sex, he would abandon himself to it in all its perversity. If gentlemanly restraint was the British order of the day, he would erupt with Rabelaisian outrageousness. If they favored sober self-discipline, he would smoke and drink and use the English language to excess. If they were somehow bound into their medieval social system by a medieval Christian Church, he would become an atheist and then turn to some alien religion—to Gnosticism and to Buddhism. And if his generation embraced socialism he was happy to declare himself a monarcho-fascist....

And, Bowker might have added, if Britain ordained that the road to success was by way of Oxford or Cambridge, he would fail every entrance exam and then beat the private-club snobs as a brilliant autodidact.

In 1928, at the age of forty-three, Samuel Durrell died of a cerebral hemorrhage, after weeks of erratic behavior (drinking ink instead of whiskey, according to one report) that later encouraged Larry to fantasize about inheriting a streak of insanity. (It was essential, he argued, for writing.) The will yielded a very solid nest-egg. As a result Mrs. Durrell moved her entire family—Leslie the gun-freak, Margo with her acne, and young Gerald, already the compulsive naturalist who would eventually immortalize them all—to join Larry in England.

Larry's scholastic efforts at a crammer were finally nullified when, on a reading-party abroad, he had three days in Paris, and was hooked. He went back again and again. Sometime around 1930 (as he recounted in his very last book, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*) he was picked up in the Luxembourg Gardens by a young French student called Gabrielle, who took him back to her attic and made him an exquisite *croque-monsieur*, washed down with red wine, before embarking on his seduction.

The contrast with the Pudding Island girls ("all descended from Canute," Durrell insists) was not just in the matter of the latter's "suffocating prudery," either. Poor though she was, Gabrielle had just bought her first original painting, and was paying for it on the installment plan. Continental Europe, it was clear, had sex and culture too. Durrell made up his mind. He was, he would be, a writer; above all, a poet. (In an interview many years later, he confessed that "I feel that I am a very great fraud. You understand, in reality I detest novels"—a statement that merits more attention than it has received.)

He decided that Cambridge, for this, was useless. London's bohemia was the place to be. Durrell left his family in the seaside suburbia of Bournemouth, and took off for the bright lights. With typical hyperbole, he afterwards claimed that between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four he had never slept, and this, he figured, shortened his life. Between 1931 and 1935, he lived largely in bedsitters (in one of them, he swore, Rimbaud had attacked Verlaine with a dead fish). Heavy drinking was in, and Durrell acquired the habit. He augmented his allowance with stints as a jazz pianist, and with various temporary jobs.

LAWRENCE DURRELL BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

While selling vacuum cleaners in 1932, he met Nancy Myers, a tall, pale, blonde art student whom he nicknamed "The Lamp Post." Durrell himself—this is another important factor in assessing his character—was only an inch or two over five feet tall. (I vividly recall the equally bohemian critic John Davenport remarking of him: "Pompous sex-mad little dwarf, all he's good for is navel-licking.") Nancy was to become his first wife; and thus, inevitably, Larry being Larry, after a while, as an artist, his competitor. She also has the distinction of being the only one of his wives who left him, instead of dying or being dumped.

Durrell now began the inevitable autobiographical novel, *Pied Piper of Lovers*, an oddly inapposite title, since like Eliot's Webster, it was "much possessed by death," always a favorite topic of his. He also saw himself as a modern Hamlet: his lively sense of the ridiculous did not extend to self-scrutiny. He met many of the certified bohemians of the



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day, including John Gawsworth, Mulk Raj Anand, George Barker, Peter Bull, and Dylan Thomas. Nancy moved in with him, and on her twenty-first birthday received a bequest that let them pursue the literary life for a while without distraction. The novel (inevitably influenced by the current icons Aldous Huxley, Richard Aldington, and Robert Graves) went the rounds. Durrell began to explore the minor Elizabethans.

How long this London *ronde* might have continued it is hard to guess. But it so happened that a friend, George Wilkinson, had gone out to live on Corfu, from where he sent back ecstatic letters about sun, sea, climate, the charmingly idiosyncratic locals, and—best of all—the incredibly cheap cost of living. Mrs. Durrell, whose financial habits were wildly impractical, jumped at the idea when Larry suggested it. Nancy was drawn by the lure of Byzantine icons. The Bournemouth house was sold. Nancy and Larry got married. In March 1935, the Durrell family descended on Corfu.

The *mise-en-scène* of the island that served Gerry so well in his memoir was viewed very differently by Larry in *Prospero's Cell*, his first (and for many his best) travel book. This idiosyncratic literary exploration of Corfu blended history, autobiography, sketches of local characters (some invented), and endless anecdotes. Hit and miss, Durrell had stumbled on a magical formula that he was to use again, no less seductively, when celebrating Rhodes and Cyprus. Islands always intrigued him.

Greece's physical and psychological impact on Durrell comes through unforgettably in *Prospero's Cell*. It is probably the most innocent book, certainly the happiest, that he ever wrote. With infectious zest he embraced everything that later got the label "Aegeanism": a life of bare essentials, flavored with sea-salt and oregano, alert to natural beauty, tasting of spit-roast lamb and resinated wine, preserving the great simplicities that had all but vanished from life in the over-industrialized West. He was never to live in England again: *Prospero's Cell* was his subtlest, and best, indictment of Pudding Island.

Still, as MacNeice remarked when apostrophizing a hypothetical Communist, "This poise is perfect but maintained / For one day only." For *Prospero's Cell* was actually written in wartime Egypt, at a time when Durrell was exiled from his Greek paradise, and the Nazi swastika flew above the Acropolis; when Nancy, weary of expatriate limbo, had opted to become part of her own society again, taking their daughter Penelope with her.

One of the things that Greeks, ancient or modern, have always understood very well is the nature of the resident alien, the long-term expatriate. They have a name for such people. They call them *metoikoi*, usually Englished as "metics," and they keep a prescribed place for them, free of most demands but, in essence, out of the loop. This answers the most common motive of the self-exiled: a driving need *not* to be involved in society's social, political, or religious responsibilities. Those who actually want to identify with a country, and thereby to transmute the identity with which they were born, are much rarer. In Greece—as Kevin Andrews, a bilingual who actually took Greek citizenship, once assured me—*the thing is anyway impossible.*

Like most expatriate writers or artists, Durrell was not only fleeing values that he detested. He was also, consciously or not, aiming to avoid normal social obligations altogether. Any attempt to understand his life, in particular his relationships with the women he married—as well as, to a considerable extent, what he chose to write—must constantly bear this central, and crucial, fact in mind.

During his years on Corfu Durrell also began a relationship that he, and many others, persisted in regarding as personally and creatively the most important relationship of his life. Seen in retrospect, however, it was a total and unmitigated disaster. This was the mutual admiration society that he developed, and maintained over the years, with Henry Miller. The attraction for Durrell of this sleazy, bald, bespectacled, goat-faced old reprobate was obvious. Most of it is summed up in Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, a copy of which Durrell was lent on the island.

When I first read this slice of squalid and joyless pornography, it had the quite astonishing effect (I was a highly-charged teenager at the time) of putting me off sex—which in Miller's telling much resembled washing greasy dishes in cold water—for at least a month. Durrell was clearly made of stronger stuff. Here was Miller, in a way that even Whitman might have shied from, sounding his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world, four-letter words and all. Durrell wrote Miller an ecstatic and hyperbolic fan-letter, and one of the most embarrassing literary correspondences of the twentieth century was off and running.

For Durrell, *Tropic of Cancer* triumphantly aced such works as *Ulysses* or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: it was the adult book of the century, a model for modern writers to follow. It certainly made everything that he, Durrell, had written look pale and derivative. By thus identifying literary quality with outspokenness, Durrell could ignore, if he ever noticed it, Miller's hyped-up rhetoric and platitudinous narrative style. Sexual anarchy was all. What Miller had written was "like a volcanic eruption, verbal lava." (By one of those inspired typos that Durrell's comic diplomat Antrobus was later to cultivate, Bowker prints the last two words as "verbal larva": the image of maggots on rotten meat strikes me as all too apt.)

Still under the influence, Durrell wrote a new novel, a study of the "English Death" that he called *The Black Book*, in more literate Millerese: death and sickness and rain and drab fucking in a thinly disguised Bournemouth, phrases like "the dark sump of the vagina, brewing vegetable history." Oh please. A meeting soon followed in Paris, where Miller was living with, and off, his current mistress Anaïs Nin, in a comfortable studio apartment that formed part of the Villa Seurat. Miller, Nin, and the Viennese dilettante Alfred Perlès, well described by MacNiven as Miller's court jester, had—their sexual and literary promiscuities apart—one irresistible attraction for Durrell the nervous neophyte writer: they, too, were autodidacts.

He felt comfortable with them from the start. In their world of self-justificatory braggadocio and bloated rhetoric, he never risked making a fool of himself. The famous correspondence with Miller was at least as much mutual reassurance as reciprocal puffery. (Only once, over *The Rosy Crucifixion*, did Durrell ever come straight out and bluntly accuse Miller of writing a stinker; and even then he reversed himself abjectly twenty-four hours later.) What Durrell lost through missing out on Cambridge was a sense of critical perspective, a coolly skeptical eye for pretentious or lunatic-fringe nonsense. As a result, he took self-promoting egotists like Miller or Nin more seriously than he should have done.

It was the same lack of skepticism that left him with a weakness for crypto-philosophical occultism, to the considerable detriment of his later fiction. Worse, his sneaking sense of academic inferiority made him desperately anxious to impress academic critics. What he thought would please them we can see from the portentous *arrière-pensées* that he cranked out to explain *The Alexandria Quartet*. He claimed to have applied the theory of relativity to the art of fiction, when in fact he had simply offered a series of contrasting and progressively more revelatory insights, rather in the manner of *Rashomon*.

With the huge success of the *Quartet*, however, he was free to take the cockamamie notions and the strained metaphors with which he had been playing and actually use them as a basis for the



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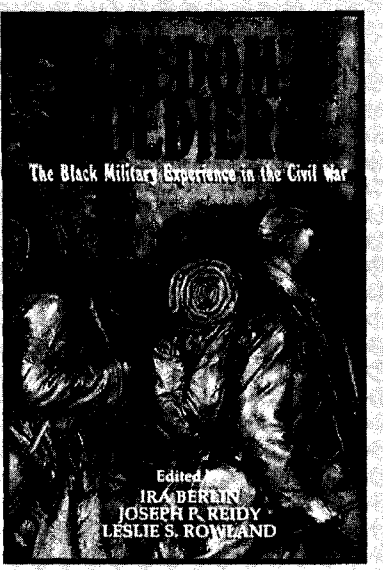
novels that he planned to write. The result, predictably, was stupefying. Earlier pet topics such as Gnosticism ran wild. Durrell got a bee in his bonnet about the Templars. And he also, with academic-inspired zest, began to deconstruct his narrators. Aficionados of the *Quartet* found this irritating, and the late novels unreadable. Durrell recommended studying *Tunc* "swallow-naked." I tried this. It still wasn't any good.

In the last resort, Durrell's long-term literary reputation will depend on his poetry, his travel-books, and, for most readers, on *The Alexandria Quartet.* Ironically, he became familiar with the scene of this, his greatest literary triumph, only through the vicissitudes of war. Evacuated by caïque from Kalamata one jump ahead of the German invasion, he landed first in Cairo, and finally in Alexandria, where he worked until 1945 in the Foreign Press Department. Of his own volition he would never have gone anywhere near Egypt. Arabs and Islam did not appeal to him; he dismissed the first as "apes in nightshirts" and found the second offensively bigoted and intolerant. Islamic critics of *The Alexandria Quartet* were not slow to point out these prejudices, and large numbers of related errors.

But of course Durrell's Alexandria wasn't theirs. It was, rather, a literary construct, created out of the city's Greco-Roman past, filtered through the ironic vision of Cavafy, and given edge by Durrell's personal and official experiences. At the same time, those who claim the Alexandria of the *Quartet* as a complete figment of the imagination are mistaken. To see where they are wrong, one need only consult Durrell's *jeux d'esprit* on the diplomatic corps. *Justine* and its successors, *Mountolive* in particular, are Alexandria as viewed through the embassy window, with irony and detachment, and above all with immunity.

In the richest and most evocative section of his lengthy biography, MacNiven draws a wonderful picture of the diplomats, officers, teachers, spies, rich Coptic Christians, international refugees, and literary hangers-on who made up the ambiguous society of wartime Alexandria in which Durrell moved. Here are the originals from which Mountolive, Scobie, Leila Hosnani, and many others were developed. Here, too, is the fraught atmosphere of a city hedging its bets between Montgomery and Rommel, a mere sixty miles away in the Western Desert.

As Gwyn Williams, long domiciled as a teacher in Egypt, wrote: "It was out of this varied and dying ferment that Larry invented his *Alexandria Quartet.*" Like *Prospero's Cell,* the four volumes were written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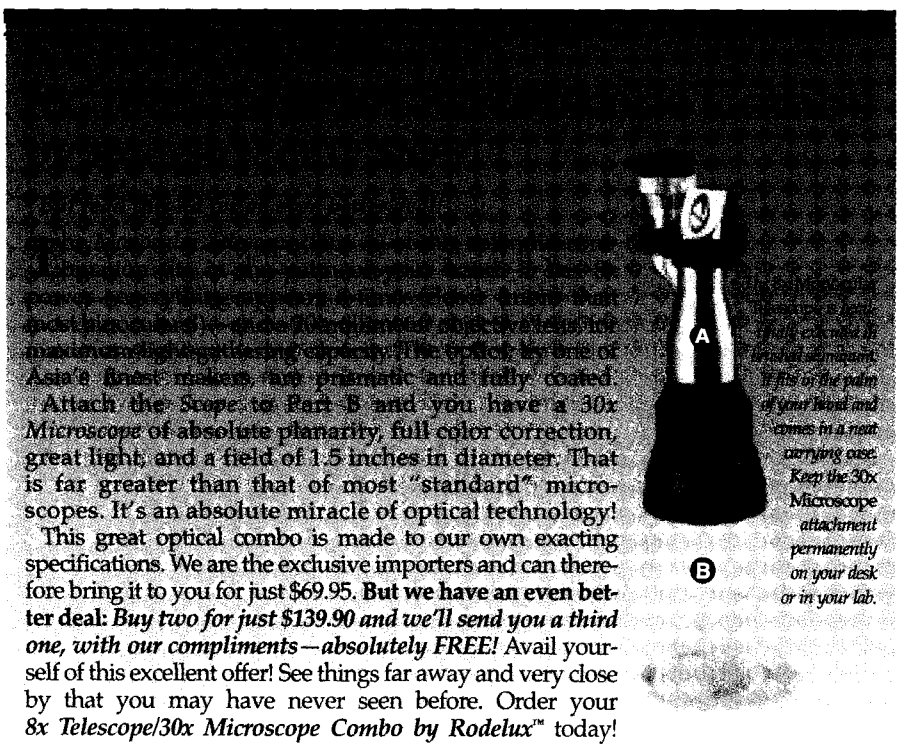


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far from the world that they depicted. Their timing, too, was ironic. *Justine* had its genesis on Cyprus in 1956, when Durrell's marriage to Yvette (Eve) Cohen—a dark, mysterious beauty, and the inspiration for Justine—was finally unraveling. *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, and *Clea* followed in rapid succession, from Durrell's new retreat in Provence, and under the aegis of his third, and happiest, marriage, to Claude-Marie Vincendon. Besides supplying Larry with a wealth of information about the Alexandria she knew so well, Claude-Marie also rounded out the enigmatic character of Clea.

The entire *Quartet* was written at white-hot speed, each volume taking an average of no more than two months. Seldom can financial pressure have served a writer better. There was no time for the self-indulgent fancies that afterwards went into *The Revolt of Aphrodite* and *The Avignon Quintet*. A decade, too, had elapsed since Durrell's Alexandrian experience: long enough for memories to regroup as myth. All the circumstances were right. It was his once-in-a-lifetime chance, the perfect, never-to-be-repeated vehicle, and Durrell exploited it to the full.

The term *bricolage* best describes the technique of the *Quartet*. Durrell uses letters, extracts from diaries (some, to confuse matters further, carefully constructed fictions within a fiction), work-notes, reminiscences, philosophical reflections, and dialogues. The language is rich, polychrome, and lushly evocative, making a paradoxical contrast with Durrell's poetry, itself stripped to the bone and chastely astringent. One remarkable quality of the *Quartet* is that, as I found by accident (when stuck for reading matter on a long French train journey), it sounds better in Roger Giroux's excellent French translation than in English: Durrell's philosophical reflections, in particular, not to mention comic creations such as Scobie or Anubal, come across with greater authority, bite, and verve.

But, in the last resort, will the *Quartet* stand up to the test of time? A good deal better, I think, than dismissive critics allow. It is melodramatic, yes; but then so was most of Dickens. It has an obsession with death and mutilation (not to mention child prostitutes), but then look at *Timon of Athens*, or Jacobean tragedy. What grips me most is its enormous vitality and readability, the sheer fascination of watching the various complex threads of a narrative at once erotic and political being strung together, the investigation of characters both elusive and larger than life. In the *Quartet*, Durrell created a whole elaborate world, intensely alive, multifaceted, multilayered. It was an astonishing and unrepeatable achievement.

The stunning international triumph of the *Quartet* largely freed Durrell from his financial woes, but it failed to bring him real happiness. The magic of those sunny days on Corfu, or immediately after the war on Rhodes, was not to be repeated. As Director of Public Relations on Cyprus, Durrell had been caught between his old British colonial instincts (benevolent paternalism to quaint happy peasants) and the grim political realities of EOKA and the *enosis* movement for union with Greece. Colonialism won, and his Greek friends never forgave him: *Bitter Lemons* indeed.

Life in Provence came to depend increasingly on an alcoholic regime. Claude, the perfect organizing wife who cooked meals, took care of his finances, and shielded him from the world, succumbed to cancer. The list of casual lovers—Buttons, Brigitte, Fiddle, another Claude—spiralled along with the drinking and the surly violence. Durrell's fourth wife, the aristocratic Ghislaine de Boysson, lasted about as long as Anne Boleyn with Henry VIII. The day after he agreed to marry his no-nonsense housekeeper, Françoise Kestsman, he died.

Grinding out the late novels was clearly agony for him, despite the literary tricks in which they abound. (The agony was hardly lessened when his daughter by Eve, Sappho Jane, committed suicide in precisely the same manner as her father had made his character Livia do in *The Avignon Quintet*, hanging herself with her own panty hose from an attic bedroom skylight.) In the most percipient and the most generous treatment of Durrell's fiction overall, Donald P. Kaczvinsky interprets the underlying theme of *The Alexandria Quartet*—and to a great extent of the other novels too—as a quest for wholeness, a struggle against cultures seen as enervating, sick, or corrupt. "Darley must, through the use of his imagination, create a whole story out of the fragments of information and a whole self out of his fragmented life." He is right; and he is also right, I think, in seeing Greece as the lost paradise, ruined for ever for Durrell after he fled Cyprus in 1957 under the threat of assassination—to plaudits, ironically, from the British establishment, which saw *Bitter Lemons* as the vindication of its Cypriot policy, and rewarded its author with the Duff Cooper Prize. Recognition by Pudding Island was a mixed blessing.

Durrell's life abounded in such ambiguities, and between them his two biographers have covered most of the essential points. Bowker's version is unauthorized, and thus debarred from quoting from his subject's work. He came to Durrell fresh from an investigation of Malcolm Lowry, another creative writer fatally in love with the bottle. For this reason, perhaps, I find Bowker most convincing, despite a plethora of small inaccuracies, on the subject of Durrell's darker side. This applies in particular to Durrell's attitude to women: pasha-like at best, and often guilty of physical assault, even in Claude's case, on various occasions knocking her out cold and threatening her with a gun.

MacNiven, by contrast, had full access to the family papers, and was invited to act as biographer by Durrell himself. His account is sunnier and more expansive (each side, clearly, represents part of the truth); and it is full and reliable on detail. All future investigators will have to begin from his account. Here and there he also rises to the occasion with a beautifully written set-piece, such as his extraordinarily evocative descriptions of northern India and the Arakan coast in Burma (as it happens, in both cases I can personally vouch for his accuracy) as the background to Durrell's childhood.

Yet there is one side of Durrell that he himself prized, which may yet prove his most important legacy, to which both MacNiven and Bowker pay surprisingly little serious attention. This is his poetry. It was no accident that he called his first serious collection of poems, in 1943, *A Private Country*: no one, including (thank God) Henry Miller and the Ninnies, had access to this jealously guarded part of Durrell's creative universe, where the symbolic and heraldic oddities so out of place in his fiction found their natural home.

By turns witty, sad, metaphysical ("My uncle has gone beyond astronomy./ He sleeps in the music-room of the Host"), celebratory (a haunting picture of Cavafy), and, in the best sense, historical (on Alexandria: "Here at the last cold Pharos between Greece / And all I love"), Durrell's poems achieve a pared-down muscular articulateness that stands in disconcerting opposition to his lush proliferating prose. Here is where a patient reader can get behind the defensive pose and glimpse a vision as hard and pure as that of Durrell's acknowledged master, Seferis. In "Lesbos," for example, Durrell wrote:

> ....The dispiriting autumn moon
> In her slow expurgation of the sky
> Needs company: is brooding on the dead,
> And so am I now, so am I.

It is the properly elegiac note on which to leave him.

PETER GREEN is the author most recently of a verse translation, with commentary, of Apollonios Rhodios's *Argonautica*.



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**TRB** *continued from page 4*

ion; the latter is a statement of opinion masquerading as a statement of fact (and a dubious fact at that).

Now, it's possible that the political elite have lost faith in Clinton even though the people haven't, thus crippling him for good. But this raises another question: Since when do we kick presidents out of office because they are no longer effective? Ulysses S. Grant served out his second term personally discredited and under a cloud of scandal; Warren Harding would have done the same had he lived. Harry Truman was a laughingstock in Washington after 1948, but he stayed in office—and won the acclaim of historians for his defiant second term. Perhaps no duck was lamer than Ronald Reagan after Iran-Contra, yet resignation was never a serious issue.

Sure, I worry about the future of Social Security; I also mourn the lost opportunity to pass significant health care reforms. But the pundits were writing off Clinton long before this scandal because Congress wasn't going to pass anything anyway. Nobody contemplated resignation then. And those who want Clinton to resign for the sake of Vice President Al Gore should keep in mind that the Lewinsky scandal has done a very nice job of obscuring questions about Gore's fund-raising—questions that, baseless or not, would have far more impact once resignation had resolved Clinton's fate.

There's a reason we have presidential elections every four years. It's because we don't want presidencies to hang on swings in public opinion. Polls are too influential already. Take the resignation argument to its logical extreme, and you're left with a system in which presidents must resign whenever their partisan utility runs out. Even if that extreme is never reached, having Clinton leave now would almost certainly add instability and weaken the presidency vis-à-vis Congress and the courts. Removal and resignation should be saved for those cases where the president is clearly no longer fit to rule—something most of the new resignation advocates obviously don't fully believe.

You don't have to take my word for it. "I don't like the idea of changing who the president is capriciously," House Speaker Newt Gingrich said last weekend. "It's not just a presumption of innocence; there's a presumption of stability, a presumption of authority, a presumption of the way the nation runs." Gingrich as the voice of reason—who would have thought? Maybe this isn't Planet Earth after all.

**JONATHAN COHN**

**CORRESPONDENCE** *continued from page 9*

## Japan's success

**To the editors:**

Jacob M. Schlesinger's interpretation of the most recent events in Japan is too simplistic ("Sundown," August 3). Schlesinger assumes the validity of Washington's suggested remedies for Japan's current economic crisis, but he, like most of the Washington would-be magicians, is wrong. Pump-priming does not work where the public debt is so horrendous and where social and demographic concerns overwhelm policy planners. His review of what Japan did for the United States during the boom period completely ignores what was likely its most important role: that of fighting U.S. inflation in the 1950s and 1960s by sending cheap exports, which sanctified free trade policies in Washington.

Washington and the U.S. public must avoid simplistic palliatives and understand that disassembling a 130-year-old system—which, simply said, did everything in the society to maximize capital plant expansion and minimize consumption—is not an easy task, especially when that system was so incredibly successful in the past in producing the world's only non-European industrial/modernized society.

SOL W. SANDERS
*Kamuela, Hawaii*

## The Delaware question

**To the editors:**

Although Delaware had little justification to be considered an independent entity prior to the American Revolution, could associate editor Jonathan Chait explain why he argues ("The Case Against Myself," August 3) that "by all rights, it should be part of Maryland"? During the colonial period, the three lower counties that comprised Delaware had usually been associated with the colony of Pennsylvania, sharing the same governor until 1776.

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# NEW YORK DIARIST

## Morality plays

THE PRESIDENT LIED BALDLY, DEceiving the American people in an egregious breach of trust, betraying both those closest to him and his administration's evident potential. By his own conduct he created the conditions for our current predicament. Still, I do not believe George Bush should have been impeached for raising taxes. It is true that Bush's dishonesty led directly to the victory of his successor and to the consternation now experienced by so many Americans. Yet, even though Bush misled the voters by making "read my lips" the fraudulent rationale for electing him—even though, as the editors of *The Weekly Standard* declare, in italics, a president "is *always* under oath"—it better suits a conservative temperament to forgive the man whom so many *Standard* writers supported.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE NEW political morality compels big lies that affect all of us to be treated analogously to small lies that affect few of us, Republicans must be troubled as they contemplate calling on George W. Bush and Dan Quayle to withdraw their presidential candidacies. Both Bush and Quayle did their part in perpetrating the mendacious "read my lips" scheme, which involved getting a lot of votes for the elder Bush on false pretenses. Even Quayle's memorable candor about his own reasons for serving in the Indiana National Guard rather than going to Vietnam cannot insulate him from the consequences of our righteous indignation. Imagine: After all these years, Quayle has not had the courage to apologize.

THE INDISCRIMINATE IMPACT OF the new political morality will cut a wide swath among aides who put their reputations on the line to defend a president with a checkered record of forthrightness. With the benefit of hindsight, it was naïve to think an adversarial press corps, a partisan special investigation, and high political stakes justified their tactics. After consistently and defiantly defending their man, they, too, will have to withdraw from public life. How can old Nixon hands like William Safire, G. Gordon Liddy, and Pat Buchanan ever hope to be heard from again?

INSIDE THE BELTWAY, BUCHANAN, a past candidate for president himself, has a reputation for sincerity arising from his passionate convictions. However repugnant or idiotic his views, he believes in them intensely. He also changes them regularly. At the moment, he repudiates the core Republican philosophy of economic freedom he aggressively espoused for a quarter-century. Misleading the American people unapologetically is bad enough. But Buchanan's attachment to revisionism is even more damaging in other contexts. In the past, he has remarked that Jews could not have been killed by diesel exhaust at Treblinka, based on the purported fact that a bus full of school children was once trapped in a Washington, D.C., tunnel, and the kids emerged unharmed. Given that he's still never backed off that flirtation with the Biggest Lie, just as he's never apologized for advising Richard Nixon to burn the Watergate tapes, you'd think Buchanan would make a fitting early casualty of the new political morality. Instead, he'll probably run for president again.

NONE OF THIS MINIMIZES THE need to uphold the rule of law. The new political morality cannot bend before public opinion or notions of prosecutorial proportionality. What matters above all is the integrity of the legal process, the nonpartisan and equitable administration of justice, and the meticulous pursuit of any offense, major or minor, that can validate eternal, immutable standards of conduct. Thus, we must all feel dark foreboding, as the pattern of abuse grows clearer and the discrediting of Kenneth Starr draws nearer. His alleged breach of Rule 6(e) regarding improper disclosure of confidential grand jury matters can only bring the judicial system into disrepute.

LUCKILY, THE NEW POLITICAL MOrality owes nothing to brazen hypocrisy. A quick scan of cable TV reveals that it seems to reward those who are pristinely qualified to make appropriate judgments about inappropriate relationships. People like losing O.J. Simpson prosecutor Marcia Clark, now a recognized legal expert. Like Arianna Huffington, who can take on the first lady for being an ambitious spouse of a controversial politician. And like many of those most responsible for putting the president where he is—George, Dick, Leon, Dee Dee—who now profess to be surprised and concerned about their former boss's wayward behavior. In addition, Senator Orrin Hatch, the erstwhile trasher of Anita Hill's reputation, deserves a special measure of gratitude. Deeply concerned for the institution of the presidency and the dignity of the office, he mustered all the solemnity befitting a senior statesman on the Senate Judiciary Committee and called the president "pathetic" and a "jerk."

PERHAPS HATCH IS SIMPLY TAPping into the new vocabulary that often accompanies a new code of ethics. Editorialists across the land have helped interpret this language for their readers. "I deeply regret that" does not mean "I am sorry" or "I apologize." "I am responsible" does not mean the president took responsibility. "It was wrong" does not amount to contrition. And "an independent counsel investigation that began with private business dealings twenty years ago" is a nonpartisan search for truth.

AT THE APEX OF THE NEW POLItical morality are its arbiters—the editors of *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page. According to a recent editorial, they "nearly alone" told us that presidential character matters and have waged an incessant campaign to focus the rest of the world on this point for some years now. With recent events vindicating their perspective, the editors now invite us to deliver our historical verdict. On the one side, we must weigh a series of objective presidential accomplishments: a landslide reelection victory, a rebound from a tough recession, robust employment and economic growth, low inflation, record-high stock markets and wealth creation, general conditions of peace, and adroit power-sharing with a Congress controlled by the opposition.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, HOWEVER, we must consider the imperatives of the new political morality. These achievements, however superficially impressive, cannot be permitted to trump the work of a thorough and determined independent counsel. Which is why the *Journal* editors can be forgiven a touch of Clintonesque "regret" now that they will finally have to concede that Lawrence Walsh was right and the historical legacy of Ronald Reagan must be forever tarnished.

**LAURENCE GRAFSTEIN**

LAURENCE GRAFSTEIN, a former TNR staff writer, is an investment banker.



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# Let me ask you something... Since when is bigotry a moral virtue?

Back in 1906, a leading American theologian published a best-selling book justifying discrimination against African Americans, saying they were creatures of uncontrollable "sensuality." Similar racist theories were spouted by politicians like the notorious "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman who toured the country under the banner, "Negro equality in politics means social equality, mongrelization, hellfire and damnation!" Belief in the innate immorality of black people, buttressed by selected scriptural references, formed the basis for slavery, segregation and lynchings.

Now come the homophobes, spouting the same hate-filled rhetoric about a different minority group. "Homosexuality is immoral, unscriptural and unhealthy," we are told. It is a "sin," like theft and drunkenness, according to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

The Pitchfork Tillmans of today warn that the "homosexual lobby" wants to bring about the destruction of the American family. Just like their racist antecedents, they are trying to whip up hatred and intolerance in order to build public support for anti-gay laws.

Sure, they can try to hide behind morality, but we all know a bigot when we see one. Think about it.

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